Routledge Sufi Series

SUFISM AND THE PERFECT HUMAN

FROM IBN ʻARABĪ TO AL-JĪLĪ

Fitzroy Morrissey

ROUTLEDGE

Sufism and the Perfect Human

Studying the history of the notion of the 'Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*), this book investigates a key idea in the history of Sufism. First discussed by Ibn 'Arabī and later treated in greater depth by al-Jīlī, the idea left its mark on later Islamic mystical, metaphysical, and political thought, from North Africa to Southeast Asia, up until modern times.

The research tells the story of the development of that idea from Ibn 'Arabī to al-Jīlī and beyond. It does so through a thematic study, based on close reading of primary sources in Arabic and Persian, of the key elements of the idea, including the idea that the Perfect Human is a locus of divine manifestation (*maẓhar*), the concept of the 'Pole' (*quṭb*) and the 'Muhammadan Reality' (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyyah*), and the identity of the Perfect Human. By setting the work of al-Jīlī against the background of earlier Ibn 'Arabian treatments of the idea, it demonstrates that al-Jīlī took the idea of the Perfect Human in several new directions, with major consequences for how the Prophet Muhammad – the archetypal Perfect Human – was viewed in later Islamic thought.

Introducing readers to the key Sufi idea of the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil)*, this volume will be of interest to scholars and students interested in Sufism, Islam, religion and philosophy.

Fitzroy Morrissey is an Examination Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He researches and teaches the intellectual and religious history of the Islamic world in the medieval and modern periods. Previously the co-author of *Iran: Persia: Ancient & Modern* (2016), and the recipient of a DPhil in Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford (2018), this is his first specialist book.

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Introduction

The idea of the 'Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is one of the most important ideas in the history of Sufism. Indeed, given the centrality of Sufism within Islamic thought and piety, particularly prior to modern times, it can be deemed a significant idea in the history of Islam as a whole. General works on the history and culture of Islam and the Arabs often make at least passing reference to the idea. Most often, they connect the idea to the names of two medieval Sufi thinkers, namely, the extremely influential – and often controversial – Andalusian Sufi metaphysical thinker Ibn 'Arabī (d. CE 1240), and his later interpreter, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1408). Thus Albert Hourani informs the reader of his popular *History of the Arab Peoples* (1991), "The idea of the 'Perfect Man' (*al-insan al-kamil*) put forward by Ibn 'Arabi was carried further by one of his followers, al-Jili (d. *c.* 1428)."[1] A more recent and also influential work, the late Shahab Ahmed's *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016), similarly describes al-Jīlī as "the elaborator from Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240), possibly the most influential Sufi in history, of the transfiguring Sufi concept of the 'Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*)".[2]

These scholars are not wrong to draw attention to the idea of the Perfect Human as a significant one in the history of Sufi thought. Nor are they mistaken to suggest that its origins, as a Sufi technical term and concept, lie in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, or that Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of the idea was taken on and developed by al-Jīlī. Nevertheless, while Ibn 'Arabī's idea of the Perfect Human has been treated in several modern studies, little attention has in fact been given to the precise nature and specific qualities of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea. As such, we have little idea of the *history* of the idea of the Perfect Human in the two centuries between Ibn 'Arabī and al-Jīlī, or of the exact nature of the latter's 'development' of this Ibn 'Arabian idea. The distinctive elements of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human, in other words, have largely been overlooked or forgotten, and his thought has instead been blurred into a common Ibn 'Arabian or 'Akbarian' tradition.[3] It is the goal of this book, then, to unravel the distinctive qualities of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human, and of his thought more generally, and in so doing to tell the history of the idea of the Perfect Human.

'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī can justifiably be regarded as one of the most important Sufi theorists of the medieval Islamic intellectual tradition. His major work,

al-Insān al-kāmil fī ma'rifat al-awākhir wa-al-awā'il (*The Perfect Human in the Knowledge of the Last and First Things*),[4] is a key text in the Sufi metaphysical tradition associated with Ibn 'Arabī, probably the most important Sufi thinker of any age. Written in Yemen at the beginning of the fifteenth century, al-Jīlī's *magnum opus* has been read by Sufis from West Africa and the Maghreb to Southeast Asia, passing through the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish speaking regions, up to modern times. Yet, despite this historical significance, both al-Jīlī and his key text are little known today, either in the West or the Muslim world. In the case of the latter, this is perhaps due in part to a general waning in the popularity and acceptability of Sufism, particularly of the more theoretical, metaphysical kind represented by *al-Insān al-kāmil* and Ibn 'Arabian works more generally. As for the modern West, our ignorance of al-Jīlī is a consequence both of a general lack of awareness of the medieval Islamic intellectual and religious traditions, and of an absence of translations (particularly into English) and scholarly studies of al-Jīlī's work. Relatively little progress has been made in this regard since R.A. Nicholson's pioneering 1921 descriptive overview of *al-Insān al-kāmil*,[5] and Titus Burckhardt's 1952 French translation of extracts from the first half of the book.[6]

To attempt to fill this gap, the present book offers the first extended study in English of *al-Insān al-kāmil*; indeed, I believe it is the first monograph treatment of al-Jīlī's thought in any European language. Specifically, this book focuses on al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea for which he became famous and which gives his major work its title: the Perfect Human. According to one of the leading Arab scholars of the Ibn 'Arabian intellectual tradition, al-Jīlī is "*the* specialist (*ṣāḥib al-ikhtiṣāṣ*), in the history of Islamic mysticism, on this topic".[7] That the idea is indeed the central focus of al-Jīlī's writing is indicated not only by the title of his most important work,[8] but also by his statement in chapter 60 of that work, which is specifically devoted to the idea of the Perfect Human: "This chapter is the basis (*'umdah*) of the [other] chapters of this book; indeed, the whole book, from beginning to end, is a commentary (*sharḥ*) on this chapter."[9] In light of this, as well as the aforementioned neglect of the distinctive features of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea, it makes sense to focus this, one of the very first book-length studies of al-Jīlī's thought, on his treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human.[10]

My discussion of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea of the Perfect Man is thematic, meaning that I break down the idea into its constituent parts, presenting and analysing the key passages from *al-Insān al-kāmil* in which he treats those different elements of the idea. Moreover, I set al-Jīlī's treatment of these different key elements of the idea of the Perfect Human within the context of:

1 his broader Sufi metaphysics, which I set out at the beginning of the book, based on my reading of *al-Insān al-kāmil* as a whole;
2 earlier treatments of the various key aspects of the idea by the leading representatives of the Ibn 'Arabian tradition, beginning with Ibn 'Arabī himself and passing through the various representatives of what I call the Qūnawī tradition, i.e. the intellectual chain of transmission issuing from Ibn 'Arabī's son-in-law, leading student and successor (*khalīfah*), Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274).[11]

I cite passages from the major texts of this tradition, beginning with Ibn ʻArabī's two great works, the massive and encyclopaedic *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (*The Meccan Revelations*) and the more concentrated and concise and more purely metaphysical *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*The Gemstones of Wisdom*), and passing through the key works of the Qūnawī tradition, including, to take only the books cited most often here, al-Qūnawī's own major works, *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʻ wa-al-wujūd* (*The Key to the Unseen Realm of Synthesis and Existence*) and *Iʻjāz al-bayān fī tafsīr umm al-Qur'ān* (*The Inimitability of Expression in the Exegesis of the Mother of the Qur'an*), al-Qūnawī's student Saʻd al-Dīn al-Farghānī's (d. 1300) Ibn ʻArabian commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous *Tā'iyyah* poem, and the commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* by ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 1329) and his student Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350/1351). Since these texts are not very widely known or accessible, I quote directly from them, generally allowing them to speak for themselves.

This contextualisation allows us to build up a picture not only of how al-Jīlī conceived of the idea of the Perfect Human, but also of what makes his conception both similar to and distinct from other treatments of the idea. As we shall see, while al-Jīlī certainly was an adherent of the Ibn ʻArabian tradition, there is much that is distinctive about his idea of the Perfect Human. In this way, the book seeks to problematise the tendency to view the idea of the Perfect Human as a perennially fixed idea, and the Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysical tradition – and Sufi thought itself – more broadly as a homogeneous and unchanging worldview. This book is therefore written from the standpoint of the history of ideas, rather than from within that Sufi metaphysical tradition or as part of an attempt to uncover perennial truths located in Sufi texts.[12]

The term 'Perfect Human' is an arresting one, and one which raises a number of important questions. In the following pages, for instance, we shall consider what makes the Perfect Human 'perfect'. This will involve considering the Perfect Human's metaphysical status as well as his or her human nature and powers within this world. After introducing al-Jīlī's life and times and his general Sufi metaphysics in Chapters 1 and 2, our focus in Chapter 3 will be on the idea of the Perfect Human as a 'synthetic being', that is, as someone who is both a locus of divine manifestation, on the one hand, and a microcosm of the cosmos, on the other. The implications of these ideas for the Perfect Human's this-worldly nature will also be explored, through a focused discussion of the miracles and sinlessness of the Perfect Human in al-Jīlī's thought. Chapter 4 will explore the important concept, closely related to the idea of the Perfect Human, of the 'Pole' of existence. And following that, in Chapter 5 we will consider another important and closely connected Ibn ʻArabian concept, namely, the idea of the 'Muhammadan Reality'. We shall also consider the related question of *who* this Perfect Human is, or was, from al-Jīlī's and his predecessors' point of view, the subject of Chapter 6. I hope that by structuring the discussion in this way, I will be able to draw out both the key elements of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea and what is distinctive about his treatment.

To anticipate my conclusions, we shall see that al-Jīlī goes further than his Ibn ʻArabian predecessors in laying emphasis on the divine aspect of the Perfect

Human; that he was more explicit than his predecessors in identifying the one true Perfect Human with the Prophet Muhammad; and that, much more than the earlier thinkers in the Ibn ʻArabian tradition, he put the idea of the Perfect Human at the very centre of his Sufi metaphysics. In the conclusion, finally, I shall briefly consider both the possible reasons for these distinctive elements of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human, and the impact that his conception had on later Sufi thought. The present book therefore serves not only as a comprehensive introduction to the Ibn ʻArabian idea of the Perfect Human, but also makes a contribution to our understanding of the historical development of this key idea, from Ibn ʻArabī to al-Jīlī and beyond. In this way, it seeks to make a novel contribution to the study of Ibn ʻArabian Sufism and the history of Islamic thought more generally.

Notes

1 A. Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, intr. M. Ruthven (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), 177.
2 S. Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 21. See also ibid., 79.
3 I prefer to use the term Ibn ʻArabian, rather than the more common ʻAkbarian', so as to avoid any impression that my analysis comes from within that tradition; that is, that I recognise Ibn ʻArabī as 'The Greatest Master' (*al-shaykh al-akbar*). As I explain below, my interest in Ibn ʻArabī and al-Jīlī is as a historian of ideas.
4 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil fī maʻrifat al-awākhir wa-al-awāʼil*, ed. Ṣ. ʿUwayḍah (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻilmiyyah, 1997). In the absence of a critical edition of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, I use the 1997 Beirut edition because it seems to me the easiest both to access and to navigate.
5 R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1921), 77–142.
6 *De l'homme universel: extraits du livre* al-Insân al-kâmil, tr. T. Burckhardt (Paris: Dervy-livres, 1956). This translation was in turn translated into English by Angela Culme-Seymour of the Beshara School (a contemporary 'New Religious Movement' that takes Ibn ʻArabī as its guide) in 1983. For translations of al-Jīlī's more minor works into European languages, see: *Das Buch der vierzig Stufen, nach einer Bagdader Handschrift hrsg*, tr. E. Bannerth (Vienna: R.M. Rohre, 1956); *Die Risāla arbaʿīn mawāṭin des ʿAbdalkarīm al-Ǧīlī*, tr. D. Mann (Doctoral thesis, Saarbrücken, 1970); *Göttliche Vollkommenheit und die Stellung des Menschen: die Sichtweise ʿAbd al-Karīm al Ǧīlīs auf der Grundlage des "Šarḥ muškilāt al-futūḥāt al-makkīya"*, tr. Angelika Al-Massri (Stuttgart: Deutsche Morganländische Gesellschaft, 1998); *Un commentaire esoterique de la formule inaugurale du Coran: Les Mystêres Cryptographiques de "Bismi-Llâhi-r-Rahmâni-r-Rahîm: Al-Kahf wa-r-Raqîm fî Sharh Bismi-Llâhi-r-Rahmâni-r-Rahîm*, tr. J. Clément-François (Paris: Editions AlBouraq, 2002); *I Nomi divini e il Profeta alla luce del sufismo* (Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah fī al-ṣifāt al-Muhammadiyyah), tr. C. Marzullo (Turin: Il leone verde, 2015).
7 Al-Jīlī, *Ibdāʻ al-kitābah wa-kitābat al-ʻibdāʻ (ʻayn ʻalá al-ʻayniyyah: sharḥ muʻāṣir li-ʻayniyyat al-imām al-ṣūfī ʻAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī*) [=*al-Nādirāt al-ʻayniyyah*], ed. S. al-Ḥakīm (Beirut: Dār al-Burāq, 2004), 5.
8 See also the titles of some of his lost works, e.g. *al-Mamlakah al-rabbāniyyah fī al-nashʾah al-insāniyyah* (*The Lordly Kingdom in the Human Organism*), *Insān ʻayn al-wujūd wa-wujūd ʻayn al-insān al-mawjūd* (*The Human is the Source of Existence and Existence is the Source of the Human Being*). See also al-Jīlī's statement in

al-Kamālāt al-ʻilāhiyyah that the human being is "the goal of existence" (*al-maqṣūd min al-wujūd*), quoted in al-S. Tarjumān, *Naẓariyyat waḥdat al-wujūd bayn Ibn ʻArabī wa-al-Jīlī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Maktabat Khazʻal, 2002), 546.

9 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 207.

10 The best treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human as it appears in the writings of Ibn ʻArabī is M. Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory of the Perfect Human and Its Place in the History of Islamic Thought* (Doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 1987). Takeshita, however, while focusing on the roots of the idea in earlier Islamic thought, does not discuss the development of the idea in the later Ibn ʻArabian tradition.

11 For a succinct overview of the Qūnawī tradition, see W. Chittick, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online edition), s.v. "EBN AL-ʿARABĪ, MOḤYĪ-al-DĪN Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Moḥammad Ṭāʾī Ḥātemī.

12 The history of ideas approach that I am following was pioneered by Arthur Lovejoy (d. 1962). See esp. A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

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Part I

Al-Jīlī's life and thought

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1 Al-Jīlī's life and work

Al-Jīlī's life and times

We know relatively little for certain about al-Jīlī's life. He does not appear in the medieval biographical dictionaries,[1] nor does he seem to have taken on formal students who could write about him.[2] For this reason, in piecing together the story of his life we are forced mainly to rely on what he tells us in his own writings, a hazardous task, given that his writings constitute Sufi metaphysical literature, not historically minded autobiography. This absence of firm evidence has produced considerable divergence of opinion among scholars who have written about his life.

We can be fairly sure, based on a verse from his poem *al-Nādirāt al-'ayniyyah*, that al-Jīlī was born in CE 1365,[3] exactly two centuries after Ibn 'Arabī (b. 1165). With regards to his place of birth, it has variously been proposed that he was born in Baghdad (in the Jīl district),[4] Yemen (in Abyāt Ḥusayn, a suburb of Zabid),[5] and, most recently, India (in Calicut on the Malabar Coast).[6] Similarly, he is said to have died "sometime between 1406 and 1417",[7] between 1402/1403 and 1425/1426,[8] around 1428,[9] in 1421 or 1428,[10] 1422/1423,[11] and, most precisely and most recently, on Saturday 18 November 1408.[12]

While the decisive resolution of these questions requires further evidence, it seems to me that the proposals of Riyadh Atlagh are both the best documented and fit best with what al-Jīlī tells us in his writings and with the fragments of information that can be gleaned from the works of contemporary historians such as Ibn al-Ahdal. Based on a manuscript of al-Jīlī's *Ghunyat arbāb al-samā'* in the British Library, Atlagh proposes that al-Jīlī was born in the trading city of Calicut in south-western India in 1365 (24 years after the famous traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (d. 1369) made his way through that city), travelled in his youth to Aden in Yemen,[13] and made his home in the city of Zabid on the western coastal plain of Yemen, where he joined the community of the prominent Sufi master Ismā'īl al-Jabartī (d. 1403).[14] From his base in Zabid he travelled widely in the Islamic world, visiting Mecca and Medina (in 1387/1388), Mecca again in 1388/1389 and 1396/1397, and Medina again in 1399/1400, India (in 1388/1389), various Persian provinces, including Fars, Azerbaijan, Shirvān and Gīlān (in the early 1390s?), Damascus (in September or October 1400), Gaza (in October or November 1400), Cairo (in March 1401),

and Sanaa (in late 1402),[15] before returning to Zabid, where he died not long afterwards (probably in 1408).

Al-Jīlī, then, was a well-travelled Muslim intellectual living in the second half of the fourteenth and early years of the fifteenth centuries. This was a period of considerable political and social turmoil in the Islamic world. In the 1330s and 1340s, the Black Death had swept through the Middle East, probably killing over 100,000 people in Cairo alone.[16] In Iran, the collapse of the Mongol Ilkhānid dynasty in the 1330s "left anarchy and a time of great confusion in its wake",[17] with the Chubānid, Injūid, Jalayirid, and Muẓaffarid dynasties competing for control. In India, the last decade-and-a-half of the Delhi Sultan Muhammad b. Tughluq's reign (1325–1351) witnessed no less than 22 serious revolts, a period of instability from which the Delhi Sultanate never fully recovered.[18] In Egypt and Syria, the final years of the Turkish Baḥrī Mamluk dynasty (1250–1382) were likewise marked by considerable political turmoil, with palace coups and revolts led by the rulers' slave-soldiers the norm rather than the exception. In 1382, the Mamluk throne was usurped by Barqūq, the head of the army, who inaugurated the Circassian Burjī Mamluk dynasty, which was to last until the Ottoman conquest of 1517. Finally, and perhaps most tumultuously of all, in the last decades of the fourteenth and early years of the fifteenth centuries, when al-Jīlī was travelling through the Islamic world and writing his early works, Tīmūr wrought savage destruction from Anatolia to India, razing Isfahan (1398), Delhi (1399), and Damascus (1401), and defeating the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara in 1402.

The recurring death and destruction of the period in which al-Jīlī lived might be seen as a factor behind his decision to devote himself to the Sufi path and to metaphysical questions such as the relationship between God and the world and the nature of existence. It might even serve as an explanation for his interest in the idea of the Perfect Human, given that the Perfect Human's role in the preservation of the world is an important part of his idea, as we shall see. While there may be something in this idea, it is probably too simplistic an explanation for al-Jīlī's interest in Sufi metaphysics, for it overlooks the wider religious and intellectual trends that marked what Marshall Hodgson called the Later Middle Period (*c*. 1258–1503) of Islamic civilisation (though these trends themselves, of course, may be connected to the political turmoil of that period).[19] There are three tendencies, I think, that are of particular relevance to us. The first is the spread of *ṭarīqah* Sufism across the Islamic world, a process that touched all levels of the social hierarchy.[20] These orders often played an important role in the socio-political sphere (thereby perhaps undermining the notion that al-Jīlī's devotion to Sufism was a form of escapism),[21] and also often served as conduits for the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī, whose works were widely read in the Sufi lodges alongside the works of his interpreters.[22] While it is true that certain *'ulamā'* were strongly opposed to the Ibn 'Arabian variety of Sufism,[23] it nevertheless seems fair to say that much of the Islamic world (particularly the central and eastern regions) provided a relatively favourable climate for Sufi metaphysical thought in this period.

Second, the Later Middle Period saw belief in the cosmic status of the Prophet Muhammad taken to new levels.[24] Literature connected to the *mawlid* festival celebrating the Prophet's birthday,[25] Sufi poetry such as the Persian *mathnavīs* of ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221) and Rūmī (d. 1273) and the Arabic poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235) and *Qasīdat al-Burdah* of al-Būṣīrī (d. 1295),[26] popular biographies of the Prophet like al-Bakrī's (thirteenth century?) *Kitāb al-anwār*,[27] manuals of prayers devoted to him, like the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* of al-Jazūlī (d. 1465),[28] and accounts of dreams in which he appeared, such as al-Zawāwī's (d. 1477) *Tuḥfat al-nāẓir wa-nuzhat al-manāẓir*,[29] helped to popularise Sufi and other mystically oriented ideas about the exalted metaphysical status of Muhammad, such as the concept of the primordial Muhammadan Light (*al-nūr al-Muhammadī*).[30] While such ideas were by no means universally accepted,[31] it seems fair to say that by al-Jīlī's time, the exaltation of Muhammad had reached such a degree that the majority of Sunni Muslims not only viewed him as the final and greatest of the prophets, but more fundamentally as a cosmically powerful and infallible individual.[32] As shall be suggested in the conclusion to this book, this may have been connected to the spread of certain typically Shiʿi ideas – for instance, about the exalted status of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Shiʿi Imams – within Islamic thought and piety in the Late Middle Period. Al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human – whom he identifies, as we shall see, with Muhammad – ought to be understood within the context of this more general trend. Indeed, al-Jīlī's work was probably not only representative of this trend, but also did much to catalyse its diffusion and development.

Third, Islamic intellectual life in this period was marked by a considerable degree of interaction and crossover between Sufism, *falsafah* (Aristotelian-Neoplatonic Islamic philosophy), and *kalām* (Islamic revealed theology), with respect to the questions that were asked, the terminology that was used, and the individuals who were pursuing these disciplines. Many of the interpreters of Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi metaphysics, particularly those associated with the interpretative tradition of his student Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, interpreted Ibn ʿArabī's works – which already contain a considerable amount of philosophical and theological vocabulary – in such a way as to make them more accessible and acceptable to the *falsafah*- and *kalām*-educated scholarly class. This is reflected in those interpreters' greater interest in the more purely metaphysical aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, particularly his treatment of the nature of existence (*al-wujūd*)[33] and the related problem of 'the one and the many', rather than in, for instance, the Qur'ān-centred storytelling of Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* or his discussion of the inner mysteries of the letters of the alphabet or the pillars of Islam (among many other topics) in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*.[34] Shahab Ahmed has termed this tendency to synthesise Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi metaphysics with the metaphysics of the *falsafah* tradition and the 'Illuminationist' philosophy of Suhrawardī 'al-Maqtūl' (d. 1191) "the *Sufi-philosophical (or philosophical-Sufi) amalgam*", a tendency that he deems to have enjoyed considerable (and hitherto largely unacknowledged) influence in pre-modern Islamic thought.[35] Furthermore, in addition to percolating Sufi thought, Avicennian *falsafah* also left a considerable

mark on *kalām* in this period,[36] as was already recognised by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), who proposed that "later" theologians (*al-muta'akhkhirūn*) such as al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), ʻAbd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī (d. *c*. 1316), and unnamed "Persian scholars" (*ʻulamā' al-ʻajam*), perhaps including ʻAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1356), author of the widely read theological handbook *al-Mawāqif*, had mixed up *kalām* with *falsafah* to such an extent that the two had become indistinguishable.[37] For our purposes, what matters is that as an educated Muslim al-Jīlī is likely to have been exposed to the works of these *falsafah*-oriented *mutakallimūn*, as well as the writings of the *kalām*- and *falsafah*-oriented Sufis of the Qūnawī tradition. While it is often difficult to trace direct lines of influence from these thinkers to al-Jīlī, what we can say is that he lived in a period in which the treatment of metaphysical questions such as the nature of existence, the problem of the one and the many, and the relationship between God's essence and attributes, was part of the intellectual climate of the Muslim scholarly elite, and that he had available to him a technical vocabulary that was partly Sufi, partly philosophical, and partly theological to help him explore these issues.

While al-Jīlī's interests and thought were undoubtedly shaped by these general trends, both political and intellectual, it is also worth us looking briefly at the particular Yemeni context in which he was living and writing. Yemen in this period (as in most periods before modern times) was divided politically and religiously between north and south, with Sanaa, the modern-day capital, acting as the dividing line between the two regions. In the northern uplands, the Imams of the Zaydi Shiʻah held sway, while the southern lowlands were ruled from Taʻizz (in the winter) and Zabid (in the summer) by the Rasulids, a dynasty that had come to Yemen from Egypt as emirs of the Ayyubid army, and established their own rule in 1235, remaining in power till 1454. While other parts of the Islamic world, as we have seen, underwent considerable upheaval during these two centuries, southern Yemen under the Rasulids experienced a period of political stability and cultural, intellectual, and commercial efflorescence. With wealth derived from customs levied on the goods brought through the port of Aden and taxes levied on agriculture,[38] the Rasulid sultans sponsored the construction of mosques and *madrasas*,[39] promoting Sunni scholarship as a way of presenting themselves as an orthodox (and thereby superior) alternative to the Zaydi Imams in the north. In this they were following the example of the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, both of whom were great patrons of Sunni institutions. As in those cases, Rasulid patronage helped attract renowned foreign Sunni scholars, such as the Egyptian hadith scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī (d. 1449), author of the most widely read commentary on *Saḥīḥ Bukhārī*, and Majd al-Dīn al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 1415), compiler of the popular Arabic dictionary *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, just as it helped to produce a number of prominent homegrown scholars such as the jurisprudent Muhammad b. al-Khayyāṭ (d. 1408) and the historian ʻAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Khazrajī (d. 1410). Indeed, a number of the Rasulid sultans were themselves accomplished scholars, authoring books on such diverse topics as hadith, astronomy, history, and lexicography. Al-Jīlī's

extensive knowledge of and engagement with the Qur'ān, hadith, and Islamic theology ought therefore to be seen within the context of the flourishing of Sunni scholarship in Rasulid Yemen and in particular in Zabid, "an educational and religious centre of tremendous importance" in this period.[40] Indeed it is very possible that, if he did in fact move to Zabid as a child, he would have been educated at one of its Rasulid-sponsored *madrasas*.[41]

Of more direct relevance to al-Jīlī than the Rasulid sultans' patronage of Sunni learning, however, was their support for and personal involvement in Sufism. Zabid in this period was the centre of Sufism in Yemen; indeed, it was one of the most important Sufi centres in the whole of the Arab-Islamic world. This seems to have been partly due to the charismatic personality and political influence of the head of the Sufi community in Yemen in al-Jīlī's time, Ismā'īl al-Jabartī.[42] With the Rasulid sultans al-Ashraf Ismā'īl (r. 1376–1400) and al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (r. 1400–1424) among their number, the Sufis of Jabartī's *ṭarīqah* were sufficiently protected to engage in controversial pursuits such as the holding of *samā'* sessions and the study of the works of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators. Thus the Yemeni historian al-Khazrajī informs us, for instance, that, on 9 Jumādá al-awwal 790 AH (15 May 1388), al-Ashraf Ismā'īl "left for the coast, accompanied by a full complement of Sufi shaykhs, in order to listen to the Reviver (*al-muḥy*) [i.e. Muḥy al-dīn Ibn 'Arabī] by the seaside during the night of the 10th".[43] Al-Jabartī in fact made the study of Ibn 'Arabī's works mandatory for his disciples, instructing them in Ibn 'Arabī's two most important works, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, along with the famous commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* by Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. *c*. 1300), 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, and ordering them to carry a copy of the *Fuṣūṣ* with them at all times. In light of this, al-Jīlī's immersion in the Sufi metaphysical worldview of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers does not come as a surprise.[44]

The political support for Ibn 'Arabian Sufism in Rasulid Yemen is probably a factor behind al-Jīlī's willingness in *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his other works to develop some of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas in new and daring directions – for instance (as shall be discussed), his profession that certain Sufi 'Friends of God' or saints, including al-Jabartī, were manifestations of the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muhammadiyyah*) and thus in some sense one and the same person as the Prophet, and his near deification of the Prophet himself.[45] At the same time, the political and cultural influence of the Sufis in Rasulid Yemen also made them a target for the criticisms of certain anti-Ibn 'Arabian *'ulamā'*, such as the Yemeni historian Ibn al-Ahdal (d. 1481), the famous Cairene historian and hadith scholar al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497),[46] Muhammad b. al-Khayyāṭ, "the principle expert in Yemen on the Muslim tradition and jurisprudence",[47] and Ibn al-Muqrī (d. 1433), "the greatest poet of the Rasulid epoch".[48]

The attacks of these scholars, though perhaps partly motivated by politics, centred primarily on their belief that the Ibn 'Arabian Sufis were professing the unity of God and man, a position that, in their eyes, constituted associating others with God (*shirk*) and would inevitably lead to antinomianism and consequently

the breakdown of social order.[49] Thus Ibn al-Ahdal, for example, accused the Sufis of al-Jabartī's community of such immoral acts as wine drinking and having sexual intercourse with the same woman, their ultimate aim being to "corrupt the religion (*ifsād al-dīn*) and lead the Muslims into error (*iḍlāl al-muslimīn*)".[50] The vehemence of these scholars' criticisms may explain the apologetic nature of some passages of *al-Insān al-kāmil* – for instance, al-Jīlī's repeated insistence that he does not profess the doctrines of divine union (*ittiḥād*) or indwelling (*ḥulūl*),[51] as well as his explicit denial that his aforementioned notion that the Muhammadan Reality appears in Sufi saints constitutes the heretical doctrine of the transmigration of souls or metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*).[52] Indeed, al-Jīlī was personally subjected to the criticism of Ibn al-Ahdal, who called him "the most perishing (*ahlak*) of them [i.e. the Ibn 'Arabian Sufis] in that sea [of unbelief]", and cited the claim of an anonymous legal scholar (*faqīh*) who had travelled with al-Jīlī that al-Jīlī believed in the "lordship" (*al-rubūbiyyah*), that is, the divinity, of all things, including mankind, the birds, and the trees.[53] In summary, therefore, we can say that al-Jīlī was living in a context in which Sufism, and Ibn 'Arabian Sufism in particular, was a key part of the intellectual and religious culture, having both powerful defenders and influential and hostile opponents. As we have seen, this reflected the situation in the wider Islamic world. Despite his obscurity today, then, al-Jīlī was nevertheless a key participant in the intellectual debates of his own time, and his ideas can therefore be used as a window into his particular world.

How to classify al-Jīlī as a thinker

Our discussion of al-Jīlī's intellectual context and influences leads us to consider the question of how to classify him as a thinker. I call al-Jīlī a 'Sufi metaphysician in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition', a description that calls for some justification and clarification.[54] There are three elements to this description, 'Sufi', 'metaphysician', and 'in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition'. Al-Jīlī ought to be considered a Sufi in three respects. First, he seems to have been formally affiliated to the *ṭarīqah* of al-Jabartī, an offshoot of the Ahdalī branch of the Qādiriyyah.[55] He refers to al-Jabartī as "my master" (*shaykhī*),[56] along with many other grand titles,[57] and to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), the famous eponym of the Qādiriyyah, as "our master" (*shaykhunā*) and "my lord" (*sayyidī*), suggesting he viewed himself as an affiliate of the Jabartī-Ahdalī-Qādirī order.[58] He also refers in his writings to his participating in the *samā'* sessions at al-Jabartī's mosque, indicating that he engaged in Sufi rituals in addition to being a Sufi theorist.[59]

Second, al-Jīlī's epistemology, which privileges knowledge obtained via some form of religious or mystical experience,[60] can be called Sufi. On numerous occasions in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, he falls back on his own experience – which he refers to using such typically Sufi terms as *kashf* (unveiling), *shuhūd* (witnessing), *dhawq* (tasting), and *fatḥ* (opening)[61] – to support the metaphysical claims he is making. Indeed, he claims that most of the contents of the book are a result of such experience, rather than of reading the books of his predecessors or listening to teachers:

> [M]ost of what I have set down in this book of mine has not been set down by anymore before me, as far as I know. Nor have I heard an address from anyone about it, as far as I understand. Rather, He gave me knowledge of it, through witnessing Him (*shuhūdihi*) with the eye (*bi-al-'ayn*) from which nothing on earth or in heaven is veiled … None of this is known, except by way of unveiling (*al-kashf*), and we witnessed it with our eyes (*shahadnāhu 'ayānan*), and this was supported by divine revelations (*bi-al-ikhbārāt al-ilāhiyyah*).[62]

Similarly, in his exposition of the manifestations of the divine names (which shall be discussed below), he writes:

> I shall mention, of all the ways [of reaching] each [divine] name, only what has occurred to me in my own wayfaring within God (*fī khāṣṣat sulūki fī Allāh*). Indeed, everything that I mention in my book, whether I am reporting about someone else or about myself, is what has been opened up to me by God (*ma fataḥa Allāh 'alayya bihi*) in the course of my wayfaring within God and my going to Him, by means of unveiling (*al-kashf*) and direct witnessing (*al-mu'āyanah*).[63]

Al-Jīlī thus indicates that such experiential knowledge is a divine gift. Furthermore, he even suggests that the knowledge acquitted through such experience it is on a par with that obtained via prophecy, and therefore that its content is the inner meaning of the Qur'an and the other scriptures.[64] Thus in the chapter on the Torah, he identifies three forms of knowledge: (1) knowledge of the religious laws (*'ilm al-sharā'i'*); (2) knowledge of "realities" (*'ilm al-ḥaqā'iq*); and (3) knowledge of "the divine mysteries" (*al-asrār al-ilāhiyyah*). All of these, he tells us, are contained in the Qur'an, yet while the first two forms of knowledge are apparent (*ẓāhir*) and propagated (*muballagh*), the divine mysteries are marked by concealment (*al-katm*), obscurity (*al-ghumūḍ*), and hiddenness (*al-buṭūn*); hence, they need to be read out of the Qur'an via interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Such interpretation, he explains, can only be undertaken by those who have attained the same revealed knowledge as the Prophet, via divine unveiling (*al-kashf al-ilāhī*).[65] Indeed, in the penultimate chapter of the book, on the seven heavens, he goes so far as to claim that in Rabī' al-awwal 800 AH (November/December 1397) he experienced an ascension, analogous to Muhammad's *mi'rāj*, through the heavens, during which he "saw all of the messengers and prophets", and "had revealed [to him] the realities of things, as they have been since pre-eternity and will be forever".[66] While it would be a mistake to suppose that the privileging and claiming of this kind of special experiential knowledge is particular to Sufism,[67] nevertheless it seems justified to consider it a key component of Sufi thought, while al-Jīlī's claim about the experiential source of *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his esoteric approach to the Qur'an certainly have parallels in other Sufi literature, not least that of Ibn 'Arabī.[68]

Third, *al-Insān al-kāmil* is based upon al-Jīlī's extensive use of Sufi technical terminology, particularly from the Ibn 'Arabian tradition. This is something that

he himself acknowledges in the introduction to the book, where he notes that, in speaking about the divine essence, he is forced to "descend" (*tanazzul*) to the level of "the technical expression of the Sufis" (*al-'ibārah al-muṣṭalaḥah 'ind al-ṣūfiyyah*).[69] Indeed, I think it possible to see *al-Insān al-kāmil* as a kind of elaborate lexicon of that technical vocabulary, for each chapter is centred upon one of the key terms of that vocabulary and opens with a definition of the term concerned, usually signalled by the phrase "X is an expression of (*'ibārah 'an*)".[70] Examples of Sufi technical terms that he uses include those taken from the Ibn 'Arabian Sufi technical lexicon, such as *al-tajallī* (manifestation), *al-aḥadiyyah* (unqualified oneness), *al-wāḥidiyyah* (qualified oneness), and *al-insān al-kāmil* (the Perfect Human); those pertaining to mystical experience, as we have just seen; and those pertaining to the spiritual path, such as *al-ṭarīq* (the path),[71] *al-sulūk* (wayfaring),[72] *al-riyāḍāt* (mystical exercises), *al-mujāhadāt* (mystical striving), and *al-mukhālafāt* (acts of resistance to the lower self)[73], and the mystical states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) along it, such as *al-fanā'* (the passing away of self), *al-sulb* (the snatching away of the self), *al-ṭams* (the wiping out of the self), and *al-saḥq wa-al-maḥq* (the annihilation and eradication of the self),[74] vocabulary drawn from the classical manuals of Sufism.[75] Al-Jīlī's thought thus ought to be situated within the context of the pre- as well as post-Ibn 'Arabian Sufi tradition.

So much for 'Sufi'; what about 'metaphysician'? Metaphysics, as ancient and medieval thinkers understood it, is a branch of thought dealing with the most fundamental questions, that is, those pertaining to the nature of existence and reality or "being as such".[76] Like other thinkers in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition, al-Jīlī is above all concerned with such questions, and, in particular, with the ancient question of how and why the many apparent existents of the phenomenal world emerged from a single existent, i.e. God, a question known as the problem of the one and the many.[77] While other, more this-worldly issues occasionally enter al-Jīlī's discussions, he ultimately views everything through the prism of this metaphysical question. This metaphysical orientation of al-Jīlī's, it should be noted, reflects the wider historical context outlined above, that is, the percolation of the metaphysics associated with the *falsafah* tradition into Sufism and *kalām*.

Al-Jīlī's debt to Ibn 'Arabī will come out when we come to look at al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysics, and need not detain us much here. For now, let us merely note that, in keeping with his affiliation to the Ibn 'Arabian Sufi community of Zabid, al-Jīlī seems to have viewed himself as being part of the intellectual chain that began with Ibn 'Arabī and continued through his interpreters. This is indicated by the fact that al-Jīlī often refers to Ibn 'Arabī as "*al-Imām Muḥyi al-Dīn*" (even in passages where he states his disagreement with him),[78] or sometimes just as "*al-Shaykh*", as was common among the earlier interpreters of Ibn 'Arabī;[79] by his decision to write commentaries on two or three of Ibn 'Arabī's works;[80] and by a passage in his commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Risālat al-Anwār* in which he reports a vision that he had of Ibn 'Arabī, in which Ibn 'Arabī taught him al-Qayṣarī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.[81]

It seems justified, then, to call al-Jīlī a Sufi metaphysician in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition. Speaking more broadly, however, we should also acknowledge that he was a Sunni Muslim intellectual,[82] who was committed to the truths of the Qur'an and Sunna and the theological and legal doctrines of the post-Qur'anic Sunni tradition. This can be seen in the short creed that al-Jīlī presents the reader with in the preamble to *al-Insān al-kāmil*.[83] Though undoubtedly inflected with his Sufi metaphysical perspective, particularly with respect to his description of Muhammad's special nature, the articles of this creed are fully in keeping with Sunni orthodoxy, stressing the unity (*al-tawḥīd*) and incomparability (*al-tanzīh*) of God, the superiority of Muhammad over other men and the finality of his prophethood, the special status of Muhammad's family and companions, the nature of the Qur'an as divine speech revealed by God to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, the truth of the pre-Qur'anic scriptures (at least in their original form) and prophets, the reality of the afterlife and resurrection, and God's determination of man's actions.

Indeed, al-Jīlī demonstrates a particular concern to stress the orthodoxy of his views, which for him means that his ideas accord with the Qur'an and Sunnah:

> I have only set down in this book that which is supported by the Book of God or the Sunnah of the Messenger of God – May God's blessings and peace be upon him – such that if it appears to [the reader] that something that I say is contrary to the Book and Sunnah, let him know that that is only with regard to his understanding (*min ḥayth mafhūmihi*), not with regard to my intention (*murādī*) …. And know that every form of knowledge (*'ilm*) that is not supported by the Book and Sunnah is a form of error (*ḍalālah*).[84]

While al-Jīlī, probably mindful of the attacks upon him and the Ibn 'Arabian Sufis by their aforementioned critics in Yemen, displays a certain defensiveness with these remarks, and while the sentiment expressed here may also be something of a trope in Sufi writing,[85] nevertheless they do reflect how in much of his writing he uses the Qur'an and hadith as hooks upon which to hang his ideas. This Qur'an- and hadith-centredness accords with his view that the knowledge attained through religious experience gives insight into the inner meaning of scripture. Furthermore, it continues the approach taken by Ibn 'Arabī, whose thought and writing are similarly Qur'an centred.[86] In both Ibn 'Arabī's and al-Jīlī's views, these two perspectives, the Qur'anic/orthodox and the Sufi metaphysical, are in perfect harmony.

Al-Insān al-kāmil

Before we look in greater detail at al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysics, a few general remarks about *al-Insān al-kāmil* are in order. While al-Jīlī does not tell us when he wrote the book, we can date its composition with relative precision by process of deduction. We know from the internal evidence of the text that it must have been completed after Rabī' al-awwal 800/November/December 1397,

for in chapter 61 he mentions a mystical ascension that he underwent on that date, while in Zabid.[87] Equally, we know that it was completed before Rajab 803/February/March 1401, for he refers to *al-Insān al-kāmil* in his *Ghunyat arbāb al-samā'*, which we can date to that year.[88] Furthermore, Atlagh has discovered a manuscript of *al-Insān al-kāmil* dated to 5 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 802/27 July 1400.[89] This means that al-Jīlī wrote the book when he was in his mid-thirties. We know that by this time he had already written a number of works, including *al-Kahf wa-al-raqīm fī sharḥ bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*,[90] a short treatise on the esoteric properties of the letters of the *basmalah*; his long Sufi poem in 536 verses, titled *al-Nādirāt/al-Nawādir al-'ayniyyah*; and a number of no longer extant works, for he refers to these in *al-Insān al-kāmil*.[91] This being said, it should also be noted that *al-Insān al-kāmil* was written prior to the majority of al-Jīlī's other important works, including *Ghunyat arbāb al-samā'*,[92] *al-Manāẓir al-ilāhiyyah*, *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah fī al-ṣifāt al-Muhammadiyyah*,[93] *Qāb al-qawsayn fī multaqá al-nāmūsayn*,[94] *Sharḥ mushkilāt al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*,[95] and *Marātib al-wujūd*,[96] among several others.[97]

While *al-Insān al-kāmil* cannot be considered a mature work of al-Jīlī's, therefore, nevertheless it is the work upon which his fame and significance in the history of Sufi metaphysical thought largely rest. The widespread influence of the book (particularly from the seventeenth century onwards) can be seen in the large number of surviving manuscripts, particularly in the libraries of the former Ottoman Empire;[98] in the existence of a number of commentaries on different parts of the book, including a commentary on the final chapter by the prominent early modern Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thinker 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī;[99] in its translation into a number of Islamicate languages, including Javanese,[100] Turkish,[101] and Urdu;[102] in a reference to the book in a famous Sufi text produced in eighteenth century India, which was particularly influential upon Southeast Asia Sufi thought;[103] in the presence of long quotations from the book, representing the position of "the Sufis" on various matters, in the widely read eighteenth century Indian dictionary of philosophical and Sufi technical terms, *Kashshāf Istilāḥāt al-Funūn*;[104] and in its provocation of several important intellectual controversies, involving prominent figures such as the Medinan Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thinker Aḥmad al-Qushashī (d. 1660/1661) and the aforementioned al-Nābulusī (the latter defending al-Jīlī's position on non-Islamic religions against the criticisms of the former),[105] and the Algerian politico-military leader and Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thinker, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1883).[106]

There are several possible reasons for this enduring and geographically widespread influence. First, although the book is ostensibly devoted to the idea of the Perfect Human, nevertheless, as we shall see, it serves as a fairly comprehensive and systematic overview of Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysics and terminology more generally, treating topics such as the different levels of existence, the nature of the divine essence, and the different categories of divine names and attributes. As already mentioned, al-Jīlī's method is to begin his treatment of each key concept by providing a definition (or multiple definitions) of the key term concerned. This being the case, *al-Insān al-kāmil* was well suited to serve,

as J. Spencer Trimingham put it, as a "mediating work" in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition, i.e. as a key to Ibn 'Arabī's ideas and technical terms for Sufis reading it in a *ṭarīqah* setting.[107] Second, it is possible that Sufi masters encouraged their disciples to study *al-Insān al-kāmil* because al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human provided a metaphysical basis for their own claims to *walāyah* ('Divine Friendship' or sainthood). Such at least was one of the criticisms levelled at al-Jīlī by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī, who deemed this profusion of claims to *walāyah* as a pernicious phenomenon.[108] Third, and connected to this last point, it is also possible that the popularity of *al-Insān al-kāmil* was related to the politicisation of the idea of the Perfect Human and its related concepts in the late medieval and early modern periods. Recent scholarship has shown how the great imperial dynasties of the late medieval and early modern Islamic world – the Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals – drew upon the Sufi idea of *al-walāyah* and related concepts such as the 'Viceregent of God' (*khalīfat Allāh, khalīfat-i raḥmanī*) and the 'Pole' (*al-quṭb*) for the legitimation of their own rule.[109] In light of this, it would not be unusual if al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil* was used as a source text by early modern intellectuals looking to develop ideas of divine kingship, though further research would be required in order to establish this.

As for the structure of the book, *al-Insān al-kāmil* is made up of 63 chapters divided (by al-Jīlī himself) into two sections,[110] the first of which, broadly speaking, treats the divine essence and attributes and the levels of existence pertaining to them (as well as the scriptures, which are connected in al-Jīlī's thought to the levels of existence), while the second deals with various Qur'anic concepts and images (e.g. the Throne [*al-'arsh*], the Preserved Tablet [*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*], the Lote Tree of the Furthest Bounds [*sidrat al-muntahá*]); the faculties (*qiwá*) of Muhammad (e.g. the heart [*al-qalb*], the imagination [*al-khayāl*]) and the angels that correspond to them; the Perfect Human; eschatology (*ashrāṭ al-sā'ah*); cosmology (*al-sab' al-samawāt*); and the different religions (*adyān*) and their forms of worship (*'ibādāt*).[111] The book thus moves in a general way from the more abstract and metaphysical to the more concrete and this-worldly – i.e. from the higher to the lower levels of existence – though it should be kept in mind that the Sufi metaphysics – and in particular the problem of the one and the many – underly everything.[112]

In terms of style, meanwhile, *al-Insān al-kāmil* is a prose work interlaced with a fairly considerable amount of poetry, somewhat like *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* or the *Lamā'āt* of the Ibn 'Arabian Persian Sufi writer Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 1289), rather than the heavily prose-based metaphysical treatises and commentaries of the Qūnawī tradition.[113] The poetry generally foreshadows or restates the ideas found in the prose: for instance, after explaining the relationship between God and creation through the analogy of water and ice, al-Jīlī quotes a few lines from his *al-Nādirāt/al-Nawādir al-'ayniyyah* in which he uses the same analogy. Aside from the poetry, al-Jīlī's writing on what are at times quite abstract metaphysical topics is made more vivid by his use of storytelling, whether recounting his own personal experiences, such as his aforementioned ascension or his meeting with "one of the strange ones of the east" (*gharīb min*

ghurabā' al-sharq),[114] or expressing the nature of the divine essence through the story of "the bird of holiness (*ṭayr al-quds*)",[115] or explaining the reason for religious difference through the story of how Adam's descendants split apart (*iftaraqat*) after his death.[116] All of these features, along with his aforementioned use of the Qur'an and hadith, can be seen to a greater or lesser degree in his treatment of the Perfect Human.

Notes

1 See Nicholson, *Studies*, 81; A. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 248; R. Atlagh, *Contribution à l'étude de la pensée mystique d'Ibn 'Arabī et son école à travers l'oeuvre de 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī* (Doctoral thesis, École pratique des hautes études, 2000), 16–17. (My thanks to Claudio Marzullo for helping me to get access to Atlagh's thesis.) Thus, while his master al-Jabartī appears in the biographical dictionaries compiled by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449), al-Sharjī al-Zabīdī (d. 1488), and al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), these works make no mention of al-Jīlī.

2 See al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 10.

3 See al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir al-ilāhiyyah*, ed. N. al-Ghunaymī (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1987), 12–14; Y. Ziedan, *al-Fikr al-ṣūfī 'ind 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī* (Cairo: Dār al-Amīn, 1998), 26–27; al-Ḥakīm in al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 10. This is also the date given by I. Goldziher, *EI*[1], s.v., "Abd al-Karīm al-Djīlī"; Nicholson, *Studies*, 81; H. Ritter, *EI*[2], s.v. "Abd al-Karīm al-Djīlī"; al-Tarjumān, *Naẓariyyat*, 541–542; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, in two volumes (Leiden: Brill, 1943–1949), 205, however, puts his birth in 777/1375/1376.

4 Goldziher, *EI*[1], "Abd al-Karīm al-Djīlī"; Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 29; al-Tarjumān, *Naẓariyyat*, 541–542. This view seems to be based on a comment made by al-Jīlī in *Qāb al-qawsayn* that he is "Baghdadi in origin" (*Baghdādī aṣlan*). See Nicholson, *Studies*, 81; al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 11; al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 12. As Marzullo notes, however, *aṣl* refers generically to family "origin", and not necessarily to birthplace. See al-Jīlī, *I Nomi*, 7.

5 Al-Ghunaymī, in al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 12; al-Ḥakīm, in al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 12. This view is based on a report related by the Yemeni historian al-Khazrajī (d. 1409) in his *Ṭirāz a'māl al-zamān* about a Sufi who lived and died in Abyāt Ḥusayn called Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, whom al-Ghunaymī takes to be al-Jīlī's father. Al-Jīlī's father, however, seems to have died in Aden. See Atlagh, *Contribution*, 21.

6 See Atlagh, *Contribution*, 20–21. Atlagh's view is based on a poem that appears in a colophon of a manuscript of al-Jīlī's *Ghunyat arbāb al-samā'* in the British Library. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1731), author of a commentary on *al-Nādirāt al-'ayniyyah* and the last chapter of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, also believed al-Jīlī to have been born in India. See Y. Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī: faylasūf al-ṣūfiyyah* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah 'āmmah li-l-kitāb, 1988), 15.

7 Nicholson, *Studies*, 81, following Goldziher, *EI*[1], s.v. "'Abd al-Karīm al-Djīlī".

8 Al-Ghunaymī, in al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 18.

9 Ritter, *EI*[2], s.v. "'Abd al-Karīm al-Djīlī". Ritter's source seems to be Brockelmann, *Geshichte*, 2:205–206.

10 Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 429.

11 Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 26; al-Ḥakīm, in al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 17; al-Tarjumān, *Naẓariyyat*, 573–575. This view is based on a comment of the anti-Ibn 'Arabī Yemeni historian Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ahdal (d. 1481).
12 V. Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 3 (1999), 351–369; Atlagh, *Contribution*, 20–21.
13 Journeys between Calicut and Aden, primarily for the purposes of trade, were common in this period, as noted for instance by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah. See Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354*, in five volumes, tr. H.A.R. Gibb (Cambridge: Haklyut Society from the University Press, 1958–2000), 2:372.
14 Atlagh, *Contribution*, 20–21.
15 See Atlagh, *Contribution*, 21–24; al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 13–16; Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm*, 15–21; Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 29–30; al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 189. These are merely the places (apart from Zabid) and dates that al-Jīlī mentions in his writings, and we should not rule out the possibility that he travelled elsewhere or spent longer in the places that he mentions.
16 See M. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 212. For the destructive effect of the Black Death on the region, see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, in three volumes, tr. F. Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958) [hereafter "Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*"], 1:64.
17 G. Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 9.
18 See R.E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* (London; Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 192.
19 See M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, in three volumes (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 2:371.
20 See ibid., 2:201–254.
21 See J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 233–241.
22 See M. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without a Shore: Ibn 'Arabî, the Book, and the Law*, tr. D. Streight (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 1–18.
23 See Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*; A. Akasoy, "What is Philosophical Sufism?" *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, ed. P. Adamson (London; Turin: Warburg Institute, 2011), 229–249.
24 See Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:250–252; J. Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2015), 227–228.
25 See M. Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007). See also M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī*, tr. L. Sherrard (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1999), 67: "During the age of Ibn 'Arabī, on the initiative of the Ayyubids or, rather, of the Ṣūfīs who inspired them, the Prophet's *mawlid*, or birthday, began to be celebrated on a regular basis."
26 See A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill, NC; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 177–215.
27 See B. Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23–39.

28 For al-Jazūlī and his *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, see V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 155–195, 211–213.

29 See J. Katz, *Dreams, Sufism, and Sainthood: The Visionary Career of Muhammad al-Zawâwî* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

30 On this idea, see U. Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nur Muhammad". *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62–119; Rubin, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Nūr Muhammadī."

31 See Rubin, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Nūr Muhammadī"; Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 192–193.

32 From a different perspective, the exaltation of the Prophet can also be seen in the emergence for the first time in the fourteenth century of treatises on blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad, such as Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 1328) *al-Ṣārim al-maslūl 'alá shātim al-rasūl* (*The Sword Unsheathed Against Whoever Insults the Messenger*) and Tāqī al-Dīn al-Subkī's (d. 1355), *al-Sayf al-maslūl 'alá man sabba al-rasūl* (*The Sword Unsheathed Against Whoever Blasphemes Against the Messenger*). See C. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 124–125.

33 Thus, for instance, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's widely read *Muqaddimah* (introduction) to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* begins with a treatment not of God or the divine essence but of "existence" (*al-wujūd*) as such.

34 See J. Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and His Interpreters", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (Michigan) 106, no. 3 (1986), 539–564, 106, no. 4 (1986), 733–756, 107, no. 1 (1987), 101–120; Akasoy, "What is Philosophical Sufism?", 242–249; R. Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); A. Shaker, *Thinking in the Language of Reality: Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnavī (1207–74 CE) and the Mystical Philosophy of Reason* (USA: XLibris, 2015); C. Dagli, *Ibn al-'Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2016). On the storytelling of the *Fuṣūṣ*, see R. Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets: Ibn 'Arabī's Thought and Method in the* Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 13–16. Ibn 'Arabī's discussion of the letters of the alphabet comes in chapter 2 of the *Futūḥāt*, and his discussion of the pillars of Islam in chapters 67–72. It is notable that al-Jīlī does in fact take forward these other aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, in addition to him being influenced by the more metaphysically minded Sufi thought of al-Qūnawī and his followers.

35 Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 31. It is significant that Ahmed explicitly identifies al-Jīlī as being part of this Sufi-philosophical amalgam. See ibid., 94–95.

36 See Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:323–325.

37 See A. Dhanani, "*Al-Mawāqif fī 'ilm al-kalām* by 'Aḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355), and Its Commentaries", *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. K. El-Rouayheb and S. Schmidtke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 375–396; M. Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1957), 31–33. Ibn Khaldūn's statement can be found in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:52; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, in three volumes, ed. 'A. Wāfī (Cairo: Dār Nahdat Miṣr li-al-nashr, 2014) [hereafter "Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*"], 976–977.

38 See É. Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans Rasulides du Yémen (626–858/1229–1454)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010). For the development of Aden as a trading hub in the centuries prior to the arrival of the Rasulids, see R.E. Margariti, *Aden & the Indian Ocean Trade: 150 Years in the Life*

of a Medieval Arabian Port (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

39 According to the *Encyclopaedia of Yemen*, there were approximately 240 mosques and madrasas in Zabid in the first half of the fourteenth century. See A.J. 'Afīf, *al-Mawsū'ah al-yamaniyyah*, in four volumes (Sanaa: Mu'assassat al-'Afīf al-thaqāfiyyah, 2003), 2:1445.

40 G.R. Smith, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Tihāma".

41 For the Rasulids, see G.R. Smith, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Rasulids"; J. Chelhod (ed.), *L'Arabie du sud: histoire et civilisation*, in three volumes (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), 2:40–47.

42 In this regard, al-Sharjī al-Zabīdī tells us in his biographical dictionary of Yemeni Sufis, *Ṭabaqāt al-khawāṣṣ*, that al-Jabartī "was without rival among the *shaykhs* of Yemen with regard to the numbers of followers (*attibā'*) and companions (*aṣḥāb*) that he had from among the kings (*al-mulūk*), governors (*al-wulāh*) and scholars (*al-'ulamā'*)". Al-Zabīdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-khawāṣṣ, ahl al-ṣidq wa-al-ikhlāṣ* (Sana'a; Beirut: al-Dār al-Yamaniyyah li-al-nashr wa-al-tawzī', 1986), 101.

43 Quoted in Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 388.

44 For Sufism in Rasulid Yemen, see A. al-Ḥibshī, *al-Ṣūfiyyah wa-al-fuqahā' fī al-Yaman* (Sanaa: Tawzī' maktabat al-jīl al-jadīd, 1976), *passim*, esp. 95–167; Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 225–269.

45 In a similar vein, al-Qūnawī and his students were enabled to develop the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī by "the generally favourable attitude of the Seljuq sultans [of Rūm] towards Sufism". Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 6.

46 See Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 242, 376, note 106; M. Chodkiewicz, "Le process posthume d'Ibn 'Arabī", *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. F. de Jong and B. Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93–123, 114–123.

47 Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 252–254; al-Ḥibshī, *al-Ṣūfiyyah*, 99.

48 Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 256–257. See also al-Ḥibshī, *al-Ṣūfiyyah*, 100.

49 See e.g. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 237, 243, 248, 249, 251, 259; al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 33.

50 Ibn al-Ahdal, *Kashf al-ghiṭā' 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tawḥīd wa-'aqā'id al-muwaḥḥidīn wa-dhikr al-a'immah al-ash'ariyyīn wa-man khālafahum min al-mubtadi'īn wa-bayān ḥāl Ibn 'Arabī wa-attibā'ihi al-māriqīn* (*Removing the Veil from the Truths of Monotheism and the Doctrines of the Monotheists, and Remembering the Imams of the Ash'arites and Those Innovators who Opposed Them, and Clarifying the Condition of Ibn 'Arabī and His Renegade Followers*) (Tunis: Aḥmad Bakīr Maḥmūd, 1964), 214. Similarly, he accuses Ibn 'Arabī himself of "not keeping to the limits of the Muhammadan Law (*lam yataqayyid bi-qayd al-sharī'ah al-Muhammadiyyah*)". Ibid., 182.

51 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 5, 52, 149, 215, 203, 229, 255.

52 See ibid., 211.

53 Ibn al-Ahdal, *Kashf*, 214.

54 The term "Sufi metaphysics" is applied by Ron Nettler to the thought of Ibn 'Arabī. See Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 3–5. It is also used by Muhammad Iqbal, including with respect to al-Jīlī, for which see M. Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the History of Muslim Philosophy* (London: Luzac & Co., 1908), 112ff. Ziedan calls al-Jīlī "the philosopher of the Sufis" (*faylasūf al-ṣūfiyyah*) and "the Sufi philosopher" (*al-ṣūfi faylasūf*) (see Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm*, esp. 5–7), terms, I think, which might lead to an exaggerated view of the influence of *falsafah* upon al-Jīlī.

55 Al-Jīlī also tells us that he was initiated into the Chishtiyyah while on pilgrimage in Mecca in 799 AH [= 1397]. See Atlagh, *Contribution*, 23.

56 See e.g. Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210.
57 See ibid., 204–205; al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 168–169.
58 Owing to the similarity in their names, some, notably Ḥājjī Khalīfah [=Kātib Čelebī] (d. 1657), have thought al-Jīlī to be a lineal descendant of 'Abd al-Qādir. While Ziedan and al-Ḥakīm reject this (see Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 38; al-Ḥakīm in al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 11), Atlagh has found a manuscript of *al-Kahf wa-al-raqīm* in which al-Jīlī is referred to as "'Abd al-Karīm b. sibṭ al-shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī". Nevertheless, Atlagh also notes that al-Jīlī usually refers to 'Abd al-Qādir as "our shaykh", without mentioning that he is related by blood. See Altagh, *Contribution*, 10, 20–21; Marzullo in al-Jīlī, *I Nomi*, 8.
59 See al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir*, 31.
60 It should be noted that there is considerable debate in modern philosophy and religious studies on the definition of "mystical experience" and the defining features of such experiences. For an overview of those debates, see J. Gellman, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Mysticism".
61 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 11, 39, 65, 68, 69, 71–72, 79–80, 100, 125, 193, 210. Ibn 'Arabī uses the same terms to denote his own experiences. See S. al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam al-ṣūfī: al-ḥikmah fī ḥudūd al-kalimah* (Dandarah li-al-ṭabā'ah wa-al-nashr, 1981), 492–495, 662–665, 863–870.
62 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 79–80.
63 Ibid., 65. Compare Ibn 'Arabī's claims that both the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* were products of divine inspiration or revelation (*fatḥ*, *ilhām*, *ilqā'*, *tanzīl*), quoted in Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 5–6; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 225; N.H. Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn 'Arabī* (Casablanca; Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2006), 99–102. Similar claims are also made by al-Qūnawī and al-Qayṣarī. See Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 32–33; A, Zildžić, *Friend* and *Foe: The Early Ottoman Reception of Ibn 'Arabī* (Doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 62.
64 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 11: "God opened up (*fataḥa*) knowledge of the Book and Sunnah to me." Ibid., 125: "And I have brought together (*jama'atuh*) in these pages all that the Torah contains, according to what God unveiled to us about that (*'alá ḥasb mā kashafa lanā Allāh 'an dhālik*)."
65 See ibid., 121. This connection between the knowledge obtained via mystical experience and the knowledge obtained via prophecy underlies the close connection between *walāyah* and *nubuwwah*, on which see Chapter 2 below.
66 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 232. As many scholars have pointed out, the Prophet's *mi'rāj* functioned as a paradigm for Sufi conceptions of their own mystical experiences. See M. Sells (ed. and tr.) *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 47, and the references in S. Taji-Farouki, *Beshara and Ibn 'Arabi: A Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World* (Oxford: Anqa, 2007), 340, note 49. Thus Ibn 'Arabī also claims to have undergone his own *mi'rāj*. See J. Morris, "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabi and the Mi'raj", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (Michigan) 107, no. 4 (1987), 629–652, 108, no. 1 (1988), 63–77.
67 See M. Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ismaili Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–27, who identifies five different mystical types within medieval Islamic thought.
68 For Sufi approaches to the Qur'an, see A. Knysh, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Sufism and the Qur'ān"; K.Z. Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān In Classical Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006).
69 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 11. See also ibid., 79–80:

> So understand what I have indicated to you in these expressions – indeed, in the whole of this book of mine, since most of the issues of this book have no precedent, except for what has been [referred to] in technical language, for there is no way to talk about a form of knowledge except in the technical language of its practitioners.

Ḥājjī Khalīfah describes *al-Insān al-kāmil* as "a book on the technical language of the Sufis (*iṣṭilāḥ al-ṣūfiyyah*)". Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmi al-kutub wa-al-funūn*, in seven volumes, ed. G. Flugel (Leipzig: Oriental Translation Fund for Great Britain and Ireland, 1835–1858), 1:459.

70 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 11, 79–80.

71 See e.g. ibid., 65–67.

72 See e.g. ibid., 65.

73 See e.g. ibid., 267.

74 See e.g. ibid., 39, 67, 68, 205, 266.

75 In this regard, it should be noted that, alongside the works of Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters, al-Jabartī also taught the classical Sufi manuals, such as the *Risālah* of al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) and *ʻAwārif al-maʻārif* of Abū Ḥafs ʻUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234). See Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabi*, 242–243. Notice should also be made of the fact that the Ibn ʻArabian Sufis wrote commentaries on certain classical manuals: for instance, al-Qāshānī's commentary on ʻAbd Allāh Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*.

76 See P. van Inwagen and M. Sullivan, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Metaphysics". Thus Ibn Sīnā defines metaphysics or "the divine science" (*al-ʻilm al-ilāhī*) as the investigation of "the existent *qua* existent" (*al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd*). Quoted in Dhanani, "*Al-Mawāqif*", 376. See also A.M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), 282: "The first philosophy (*al-falsafah al-ūlá*), the subject of which is the absolute existent (*al-mawjūd al-muṭlaq*) *qua* absolute existent."

77 See Chapter 2 below.

78 See e.g. Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 81, 86, 89, 128. According to H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, tr. L. Sherrard and P. Sherrard (London: Kegan Paul, 1993), 30, the title imām "in many cases means the head of a school".

79 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ mushkilāt al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. Y. Ziedan (Cairo: Dār al-Amīn, 1999), 126, 127. The title '*al-Shaykh al-akbar*' (The Greatest Shaykh), which is often mentioned in modern studies on Ibn ʻArabī, only seems to have come into use in the Ottoman period. See S. Hirtenstein, "Names and Titles of Ibn [al-]ʻArabī", *Journal of the Muhyidding Ibn ʻArabi Society* 41 (2007), 109–129, 124–128.

80 Al-Jīlī is credited with commentaries on (chapter 559 of) *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, *Risālat al-Anwār*, and *Kitāb al-Tajalliyyāt*, though Chodkiewicz has called into question the authorship of the last commentary. See M. Chodkiewicz, "The Vision of God according to Ibn ʻArabi", *Prayer and Contemplation*, a special issue of the *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʻArabi Society* 14 (1993), 53–67, 60.

81 See al-Jīlī, *Ibdāʻ*, 13–14.

82 We do not know al-Jīlī's *madhhab* for sure. According to I. al-Baghdādī, *Hidāyat al-ʻārifīn: asmā' al-mu'allifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannafīn*, in two volumes (Istanbul: Wikālat al-Maʻārif, 1951–1955), 610, he was a Ḥanbalī. However, if as Atlagh suggests, al-Jīlī was originally from Calicut, we might suppose he was a Shāfiʻī, Shāfiʻism being the dominant *madhhab* in the Malabar coastal region (as it was in southern Yemen, which al-Jīlī made his home).

83 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 6–7.
84 Ibid., 11. See also the lines of verse to this same effect in ibid., 177.
85 See e.g. al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1914), 5; 'A.H. 'Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd* (Selangor, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2013), 3; A. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 40, 71, 89, 103; Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā*, 251.
86 See Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 12–13. The writings of al-Qūnawī (and his followers) are probably less Qur'an centred than both those of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Jīlī. See Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 50–51.
87 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210.
88 See al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 25.
89 See Atlagh, *Contribution*, 20.
90 For this work, see R. Atlagh, "LE POINT ET LA LIGNE: Explication de la Basmala par la science des lettres chez 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ǧīlī (m. 826 h.)", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44, SCIENCES OCCULTES ET ISLAM (1992), 161–190; N. Lo Polito, *'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī:* Tawḥīd, *Transcendence, and Immanence* (Doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham 2010), 138–270.
91 See al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 24.
92 On which, see al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 25, 37–43; Atlagh, *Contribution*, 99–103. A critical edition of the *Ghunyah* is being prepared by Claudio Marzullo for a doctorate at the University of Naples.
93 Al-Jīlī, *Al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah fī al-ṣifāt al-Muhammadiyyah*, ed. and tr. S. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (Cairo: 'Ālam al-fikr, 1997); Al-Jīlī, *I Nomi*. See also Atlagh, *Contribution*, 93–98.
94 See Y. Nabhānī, *Jawāhir al-biḥār fī faḍā'il al-nabī al-mukhtār*, in four volumes, ed. M. al-Ḍannāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1998), 1:1494–1520; C. Addas, "'At the Distance of Two Bows' Length or even Closer': The Figure of the Prophet in the Work of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 45 (2009), 65–88, 46 (2009), 1–26. Atlagh, *Contribution*, 104–110. This is the tenth part of al-Jīlī's huge work in 40 parts, *al-Nāmūs al-a'ẓam wa-al-qāmūs al-aqdam fī ma'rifat qadr al-nabī*, the majority of which is lost.
95 For this work, see al-Jīlī, *Göttliche Vollkommenheit*; Atlagh, *Contribution*, 152–161; F. Morrissey, "An Introduction to 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī's Commentary on the *Futūḥāt*", *Maghreb Review* 41, no. 4 (2016), pp. 499–526.
96 Al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-wujūd wa-ḥaqīqat kull mawjūd* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1999). See also Atlagh, *Contribution*, 142–151.
97 For the most complete list of al-Jīlī's works, see Atlagh, *Contribution*, 26–27.
98 See Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī", 3:108; Atlagh, *Contribution*, 16, 78–83; al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 24–28.
99 See Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm*, 66; al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 23–24.
100 See M. Woodward, *Java, Indonesia, and Islam* (New York: Springer, 2010), 174. For the influence of al-Jīlī on Southeast Asian Sufi thought, a topic which still needs further elucidation, see A.H. Johns, "Malay Sufism: As Illustrated in an Anonymous Collection of 17th Century Tracts", *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30, no. 2 (1957), 3–99, 101–111; P. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 75, 105, 113, 115, 123, 137, 223, 319.
101 See al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 24.

102 See Lo Polito, *'Abd al-Karīm*, 42.

103 See M. Burhānpūrī, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*, ed. and tr. A.H. Johns (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965), 53.

104 See e.g. al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn*, ed. L. 'Abd al-Badī', 'A. Ḥusayn, and A. Khūlī (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-ʿāmmah li-lta'līf wa-al-tarjamah wa-al-ṭibāʿah wa-al-nashr, 1963), 270–271, 816, 1270, 1311–1312, 1746.

105 For this controversy, see S. Akkach, *'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 107–108. For al-Qushashī, see A.H. Johns, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Al-Ḳushashī". For al-Nābulusī, see Akkach, *'Abd al-Ghani*; E. Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, 1641–1731* (London: Routledge, 2005).

106 See I. Weismann, "God and the Perfect Human in the Experience of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 30 (2001), 55–72, 67–68. For 'Abd al-Qādir, see J. McDougall, *EI*^{3}, s.v. "'Abd al-Qādir, Amīr"; T. Woerner-Powell, *Another Road to Damascus: An Integrative Approach to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (1808–1883)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

107 Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 161.

108 See al-Jazā'irī, *al-Mawāqif al-rūḥiyyah wa-al-fuyūḍāt al-subūḥiyyah*, in two volumes, ed. 'A. al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2004), 2:289; Weismann, "God and the Perfect Human", 66–68. For the profusion of claims to *walāyah* in late medieval and early modern Sufism, see also Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 162–165.

109 See A. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); İ. Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), esp. 253–258, 273–274; H. Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), esp. 200–217; C. Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigrés and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), esp. 240–284; Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 474–475. It should be noted that the notions of the Pole and the Viceregent of God had had political connotations from their first appearance in post-Qur'anic Islamic literature. See P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 24–42; N. Jamil, "Caliph and Qutb. Poetry as a Source for Interpreting the Transformation of the Byzantine Cross on Steps on Umayyad Coinage", *Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem and Early Islam*. Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9, part two, ed. J. Johns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11–57. The late medieval and early modern political conceptions of these ideas, however, were mediated through Sufi conceptions such as those found in Ibn 'Arabian literature.

110 Atlagh, however, does not believe this twofold division to be original to the text. See Atlagh *Contribution*, 65.

111 Claudio Marzullo divides the two large sections into four subsections: (1) the key concepts of Sufi metaphysics; (2) the manifestation of the divine word (in the scriptures); (3) cosmology; and (4) the Perfect Human, astronomical symbolism, and other religions. See al-Jīlī, *I Nomi*, 16–17.

112 Thus, for instance, al-Jīlī understands the revelation of the scriptures (the Qur'an, Torah, Psalms, and Gospel) as expressions of the manifestation of different levels of God's existence. See esp. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 127.

113 See Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 49.
114 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 13ff.
115 See ibid., 26ff.
116 See ibid., 254.

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2 Al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysics

The problem of the one and the many

As already noted, the basic issue underlying al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysics is the metaphysical problem of the one and the many.[1] Stated briefly, this problem runs something like: if the source of existence is one, then how can we explain the existence of multiplicity in the phenomenal world?[2] The question can also be reformulated in more theological language: if God is one, then how can we explain the multiplicity of His creatures? While al-Jīlī does not express the problem in these exact terms, it is, as we shall see in this chapter and throughout this book, the relationship between the one (God) and the many (created beings or existents) that animates his intellectual project.[3] In his preoccupation with this question, and the solutions that he proposes for it, al-Jīlī thus establishes himself firmly within the intellectual tradition of Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters,[4] and, more generally, within a loosely conceived Neoplatonic philosophical tradition.[5]

Key to al-Jīlī's attempt to explicate the issue of the one and the many is the concept of divine manifestation or theophany (*tajallī*, *ẓuhūr*).[6] This concept, which is close – though not identical – to the Neoplatonic concept of emanation,[7] and which has Qur'anic roots (see Q 7:143), is perhaps the key concept in the Sufi metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters.[8] For al-Jīlī, as for Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters, it is through *tajallī* that the one becomes the many, or, put another way, that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), i.e. God, emerges into creation (*al-khalq*). As al-Jīlī, again following Ibn 'Arabī, sees it, this process of *tajallī* encompasses reality in its entirety. He tells us that God's "perfection (*kamāluhu*) appears in every part of and every individual within the world";[9] that "in every existent the essence of God exists";[10] that "there is nothing in existence but You";[11] that "the attributes of [the divine] glory (*awṣāf al-majd*) are flowing (*sāriyah*) through all existents";[12] that "every living thing is in His life";[13] that "the Real was given free rein in all things that you see, which are thus manifestations of the Designer (*tajalliyyāt al-ṣāni'*)";[14] that "existents in their entirety are loci for the appearance of the beauty of the Real (*maẓāhir jamāl al-ḥaqq*)";[15] that, when God declares in the Qur'an, "There is no god but Me" (Q 20:14) what He means is, "There is nothing but Me",[16] and similarly that the true meaning of the *shahādah* is, "There is nothing in existence but God (*lā fī al-wujūd shay' illā*

Allāh)";[17] that a hadith that relates how God descends to the heaven of the lower world (*samā' al-dunyā*) in the last third of the night is an allusion to "the appearance of the Real in every particle of existence (*ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq fī kull dhurrah min dhurrāt al-wujūd*)";[18] that "He is manifest (*mutajjallin*) in everything that is transmitted, conceived, understood, imagined, heard, and seen";[19] that "the Lord (*al-rabb*) has a complete face (*wajh kāmil*) is every existent";[20] and that "He is with the entirety of existence."[21] Owing to al-Jīlī's emphasis in these quotations and in many other places upon the all-encompassing nature of the divine manifestation, I call this key idea the idea of universal theophany.[22]

What does it mean, we might ask, for God to become manifest in all of creation? To answer this question, it is helpful to consider some of the other key terms that al-Jīlī uses to describe the relationship between the divine and the created. God, he tells us in various places, is the source or essence (*'ayn*),[23] origin (*aṣl*),[24] reality (*ḥaqīqah*),[25] spirit (*rūḥ*),[26] primordial matter (*hayūlá*),[27] inner nature (*bāṭin*),[28] meaning (*ma'ná*),[29] or substance (*jawhar*)[30] of creation. Looking from the perspective of creation, similarly, he proposes that creation is the form (*ṣūrah*),[31] speech (*kalām*) or words (*kalimāt*),[32] locus of appearance (*maẓhar*),[33] or locus of manifestation (*majlá*)[34] of God. These expressions all point to a relationship of underlying existential unity between God and creation. At the same time, they suggest that this relationship is characterised by both sameness and difference. God is within creation and gives it its existence, yet He is not identical to it.[35]

Al-Jīlī expresses this relationship of sameness yet difference in various ways. For instance, he writes that "everything is of one kind (*naw' wāḥid*), yet differs with the difference in its faces (*bi-ikhtilāf wujūhihi*)".[36] "You were never attained (*mawṣūl*)", he says in a poem addressing God, "nor was there decisive separation (*wa-lā faṣl qāṭi'*)".[37] Perhaps his most vivid articulation of the relationship between God and creation or the one and the many comes in the analogy that he draws with water and ice: "The world (*al-'ālam*)", he says, "is like ice (*al-thalj*), and the Real – Glory be to Him and may He be exalted – is the water (*al-mā'*) that is the origin (*aṣl*) of that ice."[38] This analogy captures rather well the sense of essential, ontological unity yet formal difference between God and creation. Using more theological language, al-Jīlī expresses the same idea in terms of the need to synthesise (*jam'*) God's incomparability (*al-tanzīh*) and comparability (*al-tashbīh*) to creation. Thus in the chapter on *tashbīh* (chapter 11) he says that, though God can be viewed as comparable to creation if we look at the manifestation of His attribute of beauty (*al-jamāl*), nevertheless

> there is no doubt that when God – May He be exalted – appears in the form of His beauty, He retains the incomparability that He deserves. So just as you give the divine honour what it deserves in terms of incomparability (*al-tanzīh*), so too give it what it deserves of the divine comparability (*al-tashbīh al-ilāhī*).[39]

Later in the same chapter, he interprets the phrases "neither of the east nor the west" (*lā sharqiyyah wa-lā gharbiyyah*) and "light upon light" (*nūr 'alá nūr*) of

the famous Light Verse of the Qur'an (Q 24:35) as indications of the need to synthesise the "lights" of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*.[40] In proposing this synthesis of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*, al-Jīlī is closely following the example of Ibn 'Arabī, whose advocacy of this view is among the key features of his thought.[41]

While God and creation are ontologically related, therefore, they are not identical. Perhaps the main reason for this – as suggested by some of the terms and expressions cited above – is that creation depends on God for its existence, meaning that the relationship is an unequal one. While God possesses true or absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*, *al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*),[42] is absolutely self-sufficient (*ghanīy*) in the perfection of His essence,[43] and possesses "complete life" (*al-ḥayāh al-tāmmah*) – defined as life that exists through itself – creation, by contrast, stands in "need" (*iḥtiyāj*, *iftiqār*) of God for its existence,[44] receives its attributes from God as a loan (*'āriyah*),[45] and has no choice in any of this.[46] In the language of *kalām*, God is eternal (*qadīm*) and creation is originated (*ḥādith*).[47] In the language of Avicennian *falsafah*, God's existence is necessary (*wājib*) while creation's is possible or contingent (*mumkin*).[48] Within this context, it becomes clear that, for al-Jīlī, God and creation are as much different as they are the same. While God is universally manifest in creation, therefore, it would be wrong to say without qualification that God is creation or that creation is God. In taking this view, al-Jīlī is again following Ibn 'Arabī, who expressed the relationship of sameness yet different via his pithy phrase, "*huwa lā huwa*", which denotes how God is "it [creation] and not it" and creation is "Him [God] and not Him".[49]

The levels of existence

Thus far we have considered the relationship between the one and the many or God and creation as if that relationship were something static or fixed. For al-Jīlī, however, this is not the case. Rather, for him the nature of the relationship depends upon perspective (*i'tibār*, *wajh*, *jihah*) – specifically, upon which of the 'levels of existence' (*marātib al-wujūd*) you look at. While the idea of a hierarchy of ontological levels is broadly Neoplatonic,[50] the more immediate context for al-Jīlī's idea of the levels of existence is the Ibn 'Arabian idea of the divine "presences" (*ḥaḍrāt*). This term appears in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, where it is often used as a synonym for "worlds" (*'awālim*), so that "the spiritual, imaginal, and corporeal 'worlds' are … referred to as 'presences'".[51] This usage was adopted and developed into a systematic idea by Ibn 'Arabī's leading disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, and his followers.[52] Al-Qūnawī and the thinkers in his tradition, such as the famous commentators on the *Fuṣūṣ* Mu'ayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, and Dā'ūd al-Qayṣarī, elaborated a system of five or sometimes six *ḥaḍrāt* to explain the emergence of the many from the one,[53] or, as they put it, the "entification" (*ta'ayyun*),[54] "descent" (*tanazzul*), or "manifestation" (*tajallī*) of the divine existence.[55] Though al-Qūnawī and his followers each put forward a slightly different variation (or number of variations) on this scheme, they differed not so much on the actual properties of the levels,

as on questions of perspective and terminology, such as whether the divine essence (*al-dhāt*) in its absolute simplicity ought to be classified as a *ḥaḍrah* or what to call the level of the essence that is qualified by names and attributes. Because it is more straightforward than some of the other schemes, we might take al-Qāshānī's exposition of the *ḥaḍrāt* as our guide. Below, I have summarised his scheme of the presences in descending order, going from the least to the most qualified and visible levels. I have also included details from the schemes of the other key thinkers in the Qūnawī tradition for comparison.[56]

1 **The Presence of the Essence (*ḥaḍrat al-dhāt*)** – "the unseen of the unseen" (*ghayb al-ghayb*), or unqualified oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*). In identifying the divine essence as the first presence, al-Qāshānī is breaking with the example of al-Qūnawī, al-Farghānī, and al-Jandī, who consider the essence to be above the *ḥaḍrāt*, and identify the first presence as that of the divine knowledge (*al-'ilm*). Al-Farghānī (and following him al-Qayṣarī) does call the first level the presence of unqualified oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*), which denotes the level where the essence is not qualified by names and attributes,[57] yet seems to distinguish this from the absolute essence per se, which he calls, among other names, "the true nature of the unseen" (*kunh al-ghayb*).[58] Al-Qāshānī, however, appears to elide this distinction.[59]
2 **The Presence of the Attributes and Names (*ḥaḍrat al-ṣifāt wa-al-asmā'*)** – the presence of divinity (*al-ulūhiyyah*). Al-Farghānī calls the second presence that of "qualified oneness" (*al-wāḥidiyyah*), a term denoting the unity that is qualified by names and attributes.[60] Al-Farghānī's terminology was adopted by al-Qayṣarī. Most of these thinkers also identify this as the presence of spirits (*al-arwāḥ*) and the spiritual kingdom (*al-malakūt*).
3 **The Presence of the Acts (*ḥaḍrat al-af'āl*)**, that is, of lordship (***al-rubūbiyyah***).
4 **The Presence of the Images (*ḥaḍrat al-amthāl*) and Imagination (*al-khayāl*)**. For al-Qūnawī and al-Jandī (who do not identify the essence as a presence), this is the third presence.
5 **The Presence of the Senses (*ḥaḍrat al-ḥiss*) and the Visible (*al-shahādah*)**. For al-Qūnawī, this is the fourth presence. Al-Jandī calls this "the world of bodies" (*'ālam al-ajsām*), and al-Qayṣarī "the world of the kingdom" (*'ālam al-mulk*).
6 While al-Qāshānī lists only five presences, the other thinkers also tend to identify a presence below that of the phenomenal world, namely the **Presence of the Perfect Human (*ḥaḍrat al-insān al-kāmil*)**, who synthesises all of the levels within himself.[61]

There is little doubt that al-Jīlī would have been exposed to this scheme of al-Qāshānī's and those of the other interpreters of Ibn 'Arabī, for we know that his Sufi master in Zabid, Ismā'īl al-Jabartī, used the commentaries of al-Qāshānī and al-Qayṣarī on the *Fuṣūṣ* – in which these schemes are outlined – when instructing his disciples in that work.[62] As we shall see presently, the scheme of the five/six presences left its mark on him, both terminologically and conceptually.

Nevertheless, it is notable that at no stage in *al-Insān al-kāmil* does al-Jīlī merely reproduce the scheme or a scheme like it; nor does he do so in any of the other works of his that I have looked at. Rather, al-Jīlī puts forward a scheme that, while grounded in the earlier conception, is marked by a large degree of originality. Terminologically, where al-Qūnawī and his followers speak most often of the *ḥaḍrāt* and *'awālim*, al-Jīlī, though he does use those terms,[63] speaks more often of the "levels of existence" (*marātib al-wujūd*). This term occasionally appears in the works of Ibn 'Arabī,[64] and is sometimes used by al-Qūnawī and his followers to denote the particular levels within the more general presences or worlds.[65] As Chittick notes, this term "carries a more philosophical and less religious connotation" than *ḥaḍrāt*,[66] though this should not be taken to mean that al-Jīlī is more philosophically minded than al-Qūnawī and his followers; indeed, the opposite is probably true.[67] Furthermore, al-Jīlī sometimes uses terms such as "loci of witnessing" (*mashāhid*) and "loci of viewing" (*manāẓir*), which connote religious experience, as synonyms for *marātib al-wujūd*.[68]

Conceptually, where al-Qūnawī and his followers identify five or six major presences, al-Jīlī identifies 40 levels of existence. It might therefore be argued that he is merely adopting al-Qūnawī's usage of the term *marātib* to denote the particular levels within the *ḥaḍrāt*. It is true that in al-Jīlī's system the worlds of the invisible (*al-ghayb*) and the visible (*al-shahādah*) overarch the 40 levels.[69] Nevertheless, these two realms also overarch the five presences of al-Qūnawī and his followers,[70] and, as will become apparent, many of al-Jīlī's *marātib* correspond terminologically and conceptually to the *ḥaḍrāt* of the Qūnawī tradition. As such, al-Jīlī's scheme can be considered an elaboration and refinement of that earlier scheme.[71] This elaboration had some influence on later Ibn 'Arabian thought; the famous Bosnian commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ*, 'Abd Allāh al-Bosnawī (d. 1644) (on whom more later), for instance, similarly identifies 40 levels of existence, making direct reference to al-Jīlī's scheme.[72]

Al-Jīlī's clearest and most systematic presentation of the 40 levels of existence comes not in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, but in his last work, which is specifically devoted to the topic, and is in fact known by the title *Marātib al-wujūd*.[73] Below, I list the 40 levels of existence, along with some of the other names al-Jīlī assigns to them in that work and, where necessary for the purposes of clarification, his explanation of the terms he uses:

1 **The Absolute Unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*)** – also called the Unseen of the Unseen (*ghayb al-ghayb*), the Simple Divine Essence (*al-dhāt al-ilāhiyyah al-sādhaj*), the Quiddity of the True Nature of the Essence (*māhiyyat kunh al-dhāt*), and the Cloud/Blindness (*al-'amā'*).[74]
2 **Absolute Existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*)/Unqualified Oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*)** – also known as the First of the Descents of the Essence (*awwal al-tanazzulāt al-dhātiyyah*), the First Manifestation (*al-tajallī al-awwal*), the Manifestation of Unqualified Oneness (*al-tajallī al-aḥadī*), the First Cloud/Blindness (*al-'amā' al-awwal*), the Reality of the Muhammadan

Reality (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqīqah al-muḥamadiyyah*), and the Level of Ipseity (*martabat al-huwiyyah*).[75]

3 **Qualified Oneness (*al-wāḥidiyyah*)** – the Second Descent (***al-tanazzul al-thānī***), an Essence open to Hiddenness and Appearance (*dhāt qābilah li-al-buṭūn wa-al-ẓuhūr*), the Fixed Entity (*al-'ayn al-thābitah*), the Origin of Otherness (*mansha' al-siwá*), the Presence of Everything and of Existence (*ḥaḍrat al-jamī' wa-al-wujūd*), and the Presence of the Names and Attributes (*ḥaḍrat al-asmā' wa-al-ṣifāt*).[76]

4 **The Pure Appearance (*al-ẓuhūr al-ṣarf*)/Divinity** (*al-ulūhiyyah*) – the Origin of Existential Multiplicity (*nash' al-kathrah al-wujūdiyyah*), the Presence of the Divine Entifications (*ḥaḍrat al-ta'ayyunāt al-ilāhiyyah*), the Presence of the Synthesis of Synthesis (*ḥaḍrat jam' al-jam'*), the Locus of Manifestation of the Names and Attributes (*majlá al-asmā' wa-al-ṣifāt*), the Presence of Most-Perfectness (*ḥaḍrat al-akmaliyyah*), the Level of Levels (*martabat al-marātib*).[77]

5 **The Pervasive Existence (*al-wujūd al-sārī*)/All-Mercifulness (*al-raḥmāniyyah*)** – the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*), the All-Merciful Presence (*al-ḥaḍrah al-raḥmāniyyah*).[78]

6 **Lordship (*al-rubūbiyyah*) –** the Perfect Presence (*al-ḥaḍrah al-kamāliyyah*), the Platform of Grandeur (*al-manaṣṣah al-'aẓūmatiyyah*), the Most Sacred Locus of Manifestation, and the Presence of Holiness (*ḥaḍrat al-quds*).[79]

7 **Kingship (*al-mālikiyyah*)** – the Presence of the Carrying Out of the Command and the Prohibition (*ḥaḍrat nufūdh al-amr wa-al-nahī*), the Lady (*sayyidat*) of the Names and Attributes.[80]

8 **The Names and Attributes of the Self (*al-asmā' wa-al-ṣifāt al-nafsiyyah*)** – the basic ones are four: life (*al-ḥayāh*), knowledge (*al-'ilm*), will (*al-irādah*), and power (*al-qudrah*), which are called the Mothers of the Names (*ummuhāt al-asmā'*). To these can be added a further three: hearing (*sam'*), sight (*baṣar*), and speech (*kalām*), making seven in total. The presence is also called the Second Manifestation (*al-tajallī al-thānī*) and the Keys to the Invisible (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*).[81]

9 **The Presence of the Majestic Names (*ḥaḍrat al-asmā' al-jalāliyyah*)** – e.g. God's names the Great (*al-kabīr*), the Mighty (*al-'azīz*), the Grand (*al-'aẓīm*), the Majestic (*al-jalīl*), the Eminent (*al-mājid*), etc.[82]

10 **The Presence of the Beautiful Names (*ḥaḍrat al-asmā' al-jamāliyyah*)** – e.g. God's names the Merciful (*al-raḥīm*), Peace (*al-salām*), the Believer (*al-mu'min*), the Kind (*al-laṭīf*), etc. To these are added the "relative names" (*al-asmā' al-iḍāfiyyah*), which are the First (*al-awwal*) and the Last (*al-ākhir*), the Apparent (*al-ẓāhir*) and the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), the Near (*al-qarīb*) and the Far (*al-ba'īd*).[83]

11 **The Presence of the Active Names (*ḥaḍrat al-asmā' al-fi'liyyah*)** – these are of two kinds: (a) the "majestic active names", e.g. the Killer (*al-mumīt*), the Injurer (*al-ḍārr*), the Avenger (*al-muntaqim*); and (b) the "beautiful active names", e.g. the Reviver (*al-muḥyī*), the Sustainer (*al-razzāq*), the Creator (*al-khallāq*).[84]

12 **The World of the Possible (*'ālam al-imkān*)** – an intermediary level (*martabah mutawassiṭah*) between the Real and creation; an "isthmus" (*barzakh*) between the existence of the eternal and the existence of the originated.[85]

13 **The First Intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*)** – the Highest Pen (*al-qalam al-a'lá*), the Muhammadan Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-Muhammadī*).[86]

14 **The Greatest Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-a'ẓam*)** – the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyyah*), the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), the Evident Imam (*al-imām al-mubīn*), the Imam of the Book (*imām al-kitāb*).[87]

15 **The Throne (*al-'arsh*)** – the Universal Body (*al-jism al-kullī*).[88]

16 **The Footstool (*al-kursī*)** – the Level of Activity (*mustawá al-fi'liyyah*).[89]

17 **The World of Active Spirits (*'ālam al-arwāḥ al-fi'liyyah*)** – the World of Exalted Spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-'alawiyyah*), which are the governing angels (*al-malā'ikah al-muhaymanah*); the World of Power (*'ālam al-jabarūt*), the World of Meanings (*'ālam al-ma'ānī*).[90]

18 **Pure Nature (*al-ṭabī'ah al-mujarradah*) –** the pure nature that is in the garments of the four elements, from which God created the world.[91]

19 **Prime Matter (*al-hayūlá*)** – the Presence of Formation and Depiction (*ḥaḍrat al-tashkīl wa-al-taṣwīr*), from which the forms of existence were born (*tatawallad*).[92]

20 **The Dust (*al-habā'*)** – the place from which God brought the world into existence.[93]

21 **The Unique Substance (*al-jawhar al-fard*)** – the Origin of Bodies (*aṣl al-ajsām*).[94]

22 **The Compound Substances and their Categories (*al-murakkabāt wa-aqsāmuhā*)** – they are divided into six categories: (a) substances connected to knowledge (*'ilmiyyah*); (b) substances connected to the eye (*'ayniyyah*); (c) substances connected to hearing (*sam'iyyah*); (d) bodily substances (*jismāniyyah*); (e) spiritual substances (*rūḥāniyyah*); and (f) luminous substances (*nūrāniyyah*).[95]

23 **The Satin Orbit (*al-falak al-aṭlasī*)** – an essential, existential orbit that revolves below the Footstool and above the rest of the orbits.[96]

24 **The Orbit of Gemini (*falak al-jawzā'*)** – a star that is a connecting principle (*kawkab ḥukmī*), which has no existence in itself.[97]

25 **The Orbit of Orbits (*falak al-aflāk*)** – the Stellar Orbit (*al-falak al-mukawkab*), the Region of the Constellations (*minṭaqat al-burūj*), which contains all of the eight stars and the planets, except for the seven stars that are in the seven heavens (on which see below).[98]

26 **The Heaven of Saturn (*samā' al-zuḥal*)** – the Seventh Heaven (*al-samā' al-sābi'*) and the Heaven of Abraham, it corresponds to the intellect (*al-'aql*) in man.[99]

27 **The Heaven of Jupiter (*samā' al-mushtarī*)** – the Heaven of Moses, it corresponds to the spiritual aspiration (*al-himmah*) in man.[100]

28 **The Heaven of Mars (*samā' bahrām al-marīkh*)** – the Heaven of John the Baptist, it corresponds to the conjectural faculty (*wahm*) in man.[101]

29 **The Heaven of the Sun (*samā' al-shams*)** – the Heaven of Enoch (Idrīs), it corresponds to the heart in man.[102]

30 **The Heaven of Venus (*samā' al-zuhrah*)** – the Heaven of Joseph, it corresponds to the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwah al-khayāliyyah*) in man.[103]

31 **The Heaven of Mercury (*samā' 'uṭārid*)** – the Heaven of Noah, it corresponds to the capacity for thought (*al-ḥaqīqah al-fikriyyah*) in man.[104]

32 **The Heaven of the Moon (*samā' al-qamar*)** – the Heaven of Adam, it corresponds to the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) in the human body.[105]

33 **The Affecting Orbit (*al-falak al-athīr*)** – the Fiery Sphere (*al-kurah al-nāriyyah*), it incorporates the strongest of the four elements – heat and dryness – and its "copy" (*nuskhah*) in the human body is bile (*al-ṣafrā'*).[106]

34 **The Affected Orbit (*al-falak al-ma'thūr*)** – the Aerial Sphere (*al-kurah al-hawā'iyyah*), its nature is heat and wetness, and its copy in the human body is blood (*al-damm*).[107]

35 **The Orbit that Seeks to be Affected (*al-falak al-musta'thar*)** – the Watery Sphere (*al-kurah al-mā'iyyah*), its nature is coldness and wetness, and its copy in the human body is phlegm (*al-balgham*).[108]

36 **The Orbit that Affects Itself (*al-falak al-muta'aththar*)** – the earthly sphere (*al-kurah al-turābiyyah*), its copy in the human body is black bile (*al-sawdā'*).[109]

37 **The Mineral (*al-ma'din*) and its Different Kinds** – there are many different kinds (*anwā' kathīrah*) of mineral. They come from the vapours (*al-abkhirah*) and smokes (*al-dakhākhin*) that rise out of the earth.[110]

38 **The Plant (*al-nabāt*)** – the Growing Body (*al-jism al-nāmī*). The majority of sages (*jumhūr al-ḥukamā'*) believe that, because it grows, there is a spirit (*rūḥ*) in the plant. In the view of the realisers (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*), however, everything in existence that is perceptible has a spirit, whether it is a mineral, plant, animal, or something else.[111]

39 **The Living Being/Animal (*al-ḥayawān*)** – the spirit mixed with the body (*al-rūḥ al-mumtazijah bi-al-jism*). There are five kinds of life: (a) existential life (*ḥayāh wujūdiyyah*); (b) spiritual life (*ḥayāh rūḥiyyah*); (c) bestial life (*ḥayāh buhaymiyyah*); (d) accidental life (*ḥayāh 'āriḍah*); and (e) the necessary life of the original form (*ḥayāt al-hay'ah al-aṣliyyah al-lāzimah*). Only the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) synthesises all of them, for the Perfect Human possesses the level of synthesis (*martabat al-jam'*).[112]

40 **Man (*al-insān*) –** the One who Synthesises the Realities of the Real and the Realities of Creation (*al-jāmi' li-al-ḥaqā'iq al-haqqiyyah wa-al-ḥaqā'iq al-khalqiyyah*).[113]

Al-Jīlī's presentation of the levels of existence in *Marātib al-wujūd* indicates that his overarching perspective accords with that of al-Qūnawī and his followers. He begins his exposition of the ontological levels with existence in its simplest, least qualified and perceptible form, which he identifies as the existence of the pure divine essence, and progresses down through the more qualified and perceptible levels, ending with the Perfect Human, who synthesises all of the levels. In addition, al-Jīlī adopts several of the key terms and concepts used

by al-Qūnawī and his followers, such as the distinction between 'unqualified oneness' (*al-aḥadiyyah*) and 'qualified oneness' (*al-wāḥidiyyah*) (a distinction made particularly explicit by al-Farghānī),[114] or the identification of the level of 'divinity' (*al-ulūhiyyah*) as the locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes (as in al-Qāshānī's scheme).[115]

All this being said, al-Jīlī's scheme is also different from and more elaborate than those of the earlier thinkers – as one would expect, given that he identifies 40 rather than just five or six levels. For instance, while al-Qūnawī and his followers, with the notable exception of al-Qāshānī, tend to consider the simple divine essence as being above the levels – a view that al-Jīlī does refer to in the *Marātib*[116] – al-Jīlī incorporates the imperceptible essence into his scheme. This willingness to think of the divine essence as more closely connected to the rest of existence foreshadows an important point that we shall consider in depth later in this book, namely, al-Jīlī's apparent identification of the divine essence with the Muhammadan Reality.

Another important element of al-Jīlī's elaboration of the earlier scheme is his integration of different frames of reference into a single scheme. Where al-Qūnawī and his followers put forward a scheme largely using the key Sufi metaphysical vocabulary of Ibn 'Arabī, adding a few key terms from the lexica of *falsafah* and *kalām* (e.g. *ta'ayyun*, *tashkīk*),[117] al-Jīlī integrates in a more complete way terms and concepts from Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysics (e.g. absolute existence, unqualified and qualified oneness, the Perfect Human), philosophy (e.g. the primordial substance, the first and active intellect, the universal soul), the Qur'an (e.g. the throne, the footstool, the preserved tablet), and the sciences (e.g. the planets, the orbits, the elements, the humours, minerals, plants). It might therefore be said that al-Jīlī's conception of the levels of existence, being a comprehensive overview of all phenomena known to him, is less narrowly metaphysical and abstract than the schemes of al-Qūnawī and his followers.

Finally, al-Jīlī's development of the idea of the levels of existence may also be connected to the significance that he places on the idea of the Perfect Human. In identifying 40 levels that are synthesised within man, there is perhaps more of an emphasis in his scheme on the idea of man as a microcosm, an idea alluded to on several occasions in *Marātib al-wujūd* (e.g. in his discussion of the seven heavens, the orbits, and the Perfect Human himself), and which, as we shall see, is a key element of the idea of the Perfect Human. Certainly, his conception of the levels of existence reflects his stance vis-à-vis the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition more generally: while his overall perspective on reality is in agreement with theirs, nevertheless he elaborates upon the ideas found in the earlier tradition, 'correcting' them where he thinks it necessary. This feature of his thought comes out most clearly in his treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human, the main focus of his work, to which we shall now turn.

Notes

1 Compare Nicholson, *Studies*, 125.
2 Plotinus refers in *Enneads* V.I.6 to

> the question repeatedly discussed, even by the ancient philosophers, how from the One, if It is such as we say It is, a multiplicity or a duality or a number come into existence. Why did It not remain by Itself? How did so great a multitude flow from It as that which we see to exist in beings but think it right to refer back to the One?
>
> A.H. Armstrong (tr.), *Plotinus*, 69.

3 While al-Jīlī, as we shall see, uses both theological and philosophical vocabulary, it is the former that dominates. Thus in the introduction to the book he states that the thing sought for (*al-maṭlūb*) is the Real, i.e. God (*al-ḥaqq*) (and not 'the One'). See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 11.

4 For the centrality of the problem of the one and the many to Ibn 'Arabī's thought, see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 7–11, and to al-Qūnawī's, see Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 56.

5 The Neoplatonic background to al-Jīlī's thought can be seen in his use of certain technical terms – e.g. the first intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*), the universal intellect (*al-'aql al-kullī*), the universal spirit (*al-nafs al-kullī/al-kulliyyah*) (see esp. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 145–149; al-Jīlī, *Marātib*, 27–29), in his conception of different worlds; in his conception of man as a microcosm (on both of which see the discussion in this chapter); in his occasional references to the defilement of the body and the lower world in contrast to the purity of the spirit and the afterlife (see e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 152, 195, 200–201); and in the high esteem in which he holds Plato (see ibid., 188–189). This loose affiliation to the Neoplatonic tradition is largely a consequence of his adoption of the Sufi metaphysical perspective of Ibn 'Arabī, for whose Neoplatonic connections see F. Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism': 'Sūfism and Philosophy are Neighbors and Visit Each Other': *fa-inna at-taṣawwuf wa-t-tafalsuf yatajāwarāni wa-yatazāwarāni*", *Oriens* 31 (1988), 1–35, 5; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*.

6 Cf. Nicholson, *Studies*, 125.

7 See Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abū al-'Alá 'Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1946), 49. *Tajallī* is not identical to the concept of emanation in the sense that the manifestation of the divine existence does not occur through a fixed series of hypostases (the One, the Intellect, the Soul, etc.), as in the classic Neoplatonic doctrine of Plotinus, or a chain of ten cosmic intellects, as in the view of the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 950/951) and his followers. See T. Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1984), 43–44; I.R. Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 269–280; S.M.N. al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), 72–73; Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 56–57. Furthermore, al-Jīlī also stresses that the divine act of giving existence (*al-ījād*) is an act of free volition (*al-ikhtiyār*) on God's part, in contrast to the purer emanationist position that the effusion of the divine being is a necessary matter. See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 86.

8 See Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 152.

9 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 51.

10 Ibid., 52.

11 Ibid., 54.

12 Ibid., 67.

13 Ibid., 79.

14 Ibid., 95.

15 Ibid., 97.

16 Ibid., 104.
17 Ibid., 266, or as he also puts it: "There is no existence for anything but God (*lā wujūd li-shay' illā Allāh*)."
18 Ibid., 132.
19 Ibid., 142.
20 Ibid., 143.
21 Ibid., 178.
22 Certain scholars have described the thought of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers – including al-Jīlī – as pantheistic or monistic, while Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters are above all associated with the idea of "the unity of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). See e.g. Nicholson, *Studies*, 140–141; Abū al-'Alá al-'Afīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Dín Ibnul 'Arabí* (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), xi; Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī", 6; Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 281, note 28. I generally avoid using these terms, since although Ibn 'Arabians like al-Jīlī believe God to be manifest in the entirety of existence, nevertheless this does not mean, as we shall see presently, that God and creation are identical, i.e. that "All is God".
23 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 5, 22, 52, 103, 104, 142; see also al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*, 115. For Ibn 'Arabī's use of the same term, see e.g. Ibn 'Arabī, *Les illuminations de la Mecque = The Meccan Illuminations = al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya*, ed. and tr. W. Chittick and M. Chodkiewicz (Paris: Sindbad, 1988), 106.
24 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 51, 177.
25 See e.g. ibid., 5, 130.
26 See e.g. ibid., 150–151; cf. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 68–69.
27 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 31, 51.
28 See e.g. ibid., 66, 142; cf. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 68.
29 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 61; see also al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*,115.
30 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 59.
31 See e.g. ibid., 18, 23; see also al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*, 115; cf. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 69.
32 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 88. For this idea in Ibn 'Arabī and Andalusian Neoplatonism, see Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 33–76.
33 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 97.
34 See e.g. ibid., 93.
35 Mindful of the criticisms often made of Sufis, al-Jīlī also insists that the relationship between God and creation is not defined by "indwelling" (*ḥulūl*), "direct contact" (*mumāssah*), or "union" (*ittiḥād*). See e.g. ibid., 5, 52, 149, 215, 203, 255.
36 Ibid., 72
37 Ibid., 94.
38 Ibid., 51.
39 Ibid., 60.
40 See ibid., 60–61.
41 See Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 48–67; Ahmed, *What is Islam*, 90. For al-Jīlī's development of this Ibn 'Arabian idea in his commentary on the *Futūḥāt*, see Morrissey, "An Introduction". For his exposition of the same idea in his poem *al-Nādirāt al-'ayniyyah*, see al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 48.
42 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 68. On this concept in Ibn 'Arabī's thought, see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 9–11; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 1133.
43 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 99. This is one of the traditional 'most beautiful names' of God, being derived from the Qur'an (see e.g. Q 2:263, 2:267, 6:133).

44 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 87, 108. This is a Qur'anic idea: see Q 35:15 – "O people! You are in need of (*al-fuqarā' ilá*) God, but God is the Self-Sufficient (*al-ghanīy*), the Praiseworthy." For Ibn 'Arabī's expression of the same idea, see Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105–106.
45 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 51, 90.
46 See ibid., 88.
47 See e.g. ibid., 100, 108.
48 See ibid., 42. For Ibn Sīnā's key distinction between necessity and possibility/contingency, the crux of his proof for the existence of God, see the useful summary and analysis in L. Goodman, *Avicenna* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 61–83.
49 See Nicholson, *Studies*, 152; W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 4. See also Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 106.
50 For the classic discussion of this idea in Western thought, see Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*.
51 Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 4.
52 See W. Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: from al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī", *Muslim World* 72, vol. 2 (1982), 107–128. For the more systematic approach of al-Qūnawī and his followers, see W. Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple, Sadr al-Din Qunawi", *Sophia Perennis* 4, no. 1 (1978), 43–58, 44; W. Chittick, "The Central Point: Qūnawî's Role in the School of Ibn 'Arabî", *Journal of the Muyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 35 (2004), 25–45, 26. For a slight corrective to Chittick's remarks, see Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 49.
53 Al-Qūnawī's student Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī, for example, specifies six *ḥaḍrāt.* See Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 116–120.
54 For the significance of this term and concept in the Sufi metaphysics of the Qūnawī tradition, see Dagli, *Ibn al-'Arabī*, 60–62, 75–80, 106–117. Though al-Jīlī does use the term occasionally (e.g. in his discussion of the fourth level of existence in *Marātib al-wujūd*), it does not appear to be so central a concept within his Sufi metaphysics as it is in the Qūnawī tradition.
55 See Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 125, note 9.
56 The following is based largely on ibid., *passim*. See also Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 11.
57 See al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik fī sharḥ Tā'iyyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, ed. A. al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2007), 1:21: "Unity (*al-waḥdah*) has two primary, original aspects, one of them [is defined by] the complete falling away of perspectives on it (*suqūṭ al-i'tibārat 'an-hā bi-al-kulliyyah*). In this aspect, the essence is called and 'unqualified one' (*aḥadan*)."
58 See ibid., 18.
59 However, in one of his lexica of Sufi technical terms, al-Qāshānī identifies *ḥaḍrat al-aḥadiyyah* with "the manifestation of the essence alone to itself" (*tajallī al-dhāt waḥdihā li-dhātihā*), implying that the essence at the level of *al-aḥadiyyah is* distinct from the utterly unmanifest and unqualified simple essence. See al-Qāshānī, *Mu'jam iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyyah*, ed. 'A. Shāhīn (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1992), 173. This reflects how the use of technical terms by Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters is marked by a certain fluidity.
60 See al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 1:21: "The other aspect [of divine unity] is the affirmation of infinite perspectives within it (*thubūt al-i'tibārāt al-ghayr al-mutanāhiyyah la-hā*) … The essence in this aspect is called a 'qualified one' (*wāḥidan*)."

61 See Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 122–123; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 11–20.
62 See Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 242–243.
63 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 123, 155, 214; al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*, 128; al-Jīlī, *Marātib*, 19, 20, 22, 25.
64 Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 14.
65 Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 109; Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 32.
66 Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 109.
67 For the impact of Avicennian philosophy on the thought of al-Qūnawī and al-Qāshānī in particular, see Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī", 2:751–756. Morris sees al-Jīlī's thought as being grounded more "in his own spiritual insight and experience" than in *falsafah*. See ibid., 3:108.
68 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 61
69 See e.g. ibid., 69, 214–215.
70 See Chittick, "Five Divine Presences", 115.
71 This accords with the view of Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī", 3:108, note 92. It should also be noted that al-Jīlī states in the introduction to *Marātib al-wujūd* that within the 40 levels there are innumerable more particular levels. In this sense the 40 levels are the "mothers of the levels" (*ummuhāt al-marātib*). See al-Jīlī, *Marātib*, 15.
72 See al-Bosnawī, *Kitāb al-qirá al-rūḥī al-mamdūd li-al-aḍyāf al-wāridīn min marātib al-wujūd*, ed. 'A. Qārṭāl (Bursa, no publisher listed, 1996), esp. 3, 6, 13, 16, 20, 29, 47, 49, 56, for the direct references to al-Jīlī's *Marātib al-wujūd*.
73 On the dating of the work, see Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm*, 70. Al-Jīlī also identifies the existence of 40 levels in his first work, *al-Kahf wa-al-raqīm fī sharḥ bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (see Atlagh, "LE POINT", 177), to which he directs the reader of *al-Insān al-kāmil* who wishes to learn more about the 40 levels (see al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 219). This indicates the consistency of al-Jīlī's general metaphysical outlook over the course of his life.
74 Al-Jīlī, *Marātib*, 15–16.
75 Ibid., 17–18.
76 Ibid., 18–19.
77 Ibid., 19.
78 Ibid., 19–20.
79 Ibid., 20.
80 Ibid., 22.
81 Ibid., 22–24.
82 Ibid., 25.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 25–26.
85 Ibid., 26.
86 Ibid., 27–28.
87 Ibid., 28–29.
88 Ibid., 29.
89 Ibid., 30.
90 Ibid., 30–31.
91 Ibid., 31.
92 Ibid., 33.
93 Ibid., 34.
94 Ibid., 35.
95 Ibid., 36.

96 Ibid., 42.
97 Ibid., 43.
98 Ibid., 44.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 44–45.
101 Ibid., 45.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., 45–46.
104 Ibid., 46.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., 46–47.
107 Ibid., 47.
108 Ibid., 47–48.
109 Ibid., 49.
110 Ibid., 49–50.
111 Ibid., 50.
112 Ibid., 51–53.
113 Ibid., 53–54.
114 See ibid., 17–18.
115 See ibid., 19.
116 See ibid., 16.
117 See Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 46; Dagli, *Ibn al-'Arabī*, 60–67.

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Part II

The Perfect Human

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3 A ‘synthetic being’

The Perfect Human as locus of divine manifestation and a microcosm

Ibn ‘Arabian antecedents

The concept of the Perfect Human, in the technical Sufi metaphysical sense, has roots in Sufi thought prior to Ibn ‘Arabī – for instance, in the earlier Andalusian Sufi Ibn Barrajān’s (d. 1141) concept of ‘the Universal Servant’ (*al-‘abd al-kullī*).[1] The term *al-insān al-kāmil* and the synonymous *al-insān al-tāmm* (‘the complete human’) are also found in earlier works of Arabic Aristotelian philosophy (*falsafah*), most notably the Christian theologian and Aristotelian philosopher Yaḥyá Ibn ‘Adī’s (d. 974) famous manual of Aristotelian ethics *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (*The Reformation of Morals*),[2] and the great Jewish jurist and philosopher Moses Maimonides’ *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn* (*The Guide of the Perplexed*; Heb: *Mōreh nevūkhīm*).[3] For these Aristotelian thinkers, however, human perfection consists in something quite different, namely the perfection of the intellect, followed, in the view of Yaḥyá, by ethical perfection (adherence to the Aristotelian Golden Mean), or, in the view of Maimonides, perfect adherence to the commandments of the Jewish Law (“halakhic perfection”).[4]

It seems, however, that the term *al-insān al-kāmil* first appears in Sufi literature in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī himself, and it is with him that the history of the Sufi idea of the Perfect Human properly begins. As far as we know, Ibn ‘Arabī first uses the term *al-insān al-kāmil* in the famous opening chapter of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*,[5] which is devoted to the Prophet Adam, or rather to “The Divine Wisdom (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*) in the Adamic Word”.[6] That chapter subsequently became the *locus classicus* for the Ibn ‘Arabian idea of the Perfect Human. In that chapter, Ibn ‘Arabī makes clear the centrality of mankind within his conception of the divine manifestation within creation: creation, he explains, is a mirror that allows God to see Himself, and Adam, the first and archetypal man (*abū al-bashar*), is “the very polishing of that mirror” (*‘ayn jalā’ tilk al-mir’āh*), and the spirit that gives life to the shapeless form of the universe.[7] Man (*insān*), he goes on, exploiting the dual meaning of the Arabic word *insān* – is thus to God like the pupil (*insān*) is to the eye;[8] he is His viceregent (*khalīfah*) upon earth and the seal on the treasure chest that is the world, whose presence ensures the preservation of the world.[9] This sets up Adam, whom Ibn ‘Arabī here identifies as the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), as the perfect

locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*) for the divine names and attributes, an idea which Ibn ʻArabī links to the Qur'anic statement that God taught Adam the names of all things (Q 2:31).[10] Thus, he goes on to say, "All of the names that are in the divine forms appeared in the human constitution."[11] Ibn ʻArabī makes this even more explicit later on in the *Fuṣūṣ*, in the chapter on Moses:

> For this reason [the Prophet Muhammad] said, with regard to the creation of Adam, who is the synthetic exemplar (*al-barnāmaj al-jāmiʻ*) of the qualities of the divine presence, which is the essence, the attributes, and the acts: "God created Adam according to His form (*khalaqa Allāh Ādam ʻalá ṣūratihi*)." And His form is nothing other than the divine presence. So He brought into existence within this noble summary (*al-mukhtaṣar al-sharīf*), who is the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), all of the divine names.[12]

One of the notable features of this passage is Ibn ʻArabī's citation of the '*homo imago dei* hadith', "God created Adam according to his form." This hadith was one of the key 'scriptural' sources for the idea of the Perfect Human for Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters.[13] Their use of it is notable in two respects. First, given that this hadith is evidently an adaptation of Genesis 1:26 – "And God said, 'Let us make man (*'ādām*) in Our image (*bᵉ-ṣalmênū*)' "[14] – its appearance in this context establishes the Ibn ʻArabian idea of the Perfect Human within a broadly conceived Biblical interpretative tradition.[15] It is therefore justifiable to set Ibn ʻArabian ideas about the Perfect Human within the context of Jewish and Christian interpretations of the *homo imago dei* motif, such as Philo's Neoplatonic interpretation of the motif in terms of the doctrine of the Logos and the related Christian interpretation of the motif in terms of the doctrine of the Incarnation in Christ (see e.g. Col. 1:15, Phil. 2:6).[16] This is something that I will do below (see Chapter 5). The second point worthy of note is that, despite the fact that the *homo imago dei* hadith appears in the two most canonical collections of hadith in Sunni Islam (Bukhārī and Muslim), it remained controversial in medieval and modern Islamic thought,[17] with one common interpretation being that the pronoun in the phrase "according to His/his form (*'alá ṣūratihi*)" refers to *Adam*, not God.[18] This perhaps explains al-Ghazālī's reluctance in his *Iḥyā' ʻulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*) to divulge the "mystery" contained in this hadith (though he is more forthcoming in his more explicitly Sufi metaphysical work *Miskhāt al-anwār*).[19] Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters' use of the *homo imago dei* hadith as one of the scriptural sources for the idea of the Perfect Human, then, reflects and might partly explain the controversial status of the idea of the Perfect Human within medieval Islam more broadly. As we shall see, al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea only served to make it even more controversial.

Returning to the passage from the chapter on Moses quoted above, we can say that Adam's synthesis of the divine names and attributes explains why the form of 'wisdom' (*ḥikmah*) that Ibn ʻArabī associates with him is the wisdom of 'divinity' (*ilāhiyyah*), for the name *Allāh* in Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysics is the divine name that synthesises all of the other names.[20] On one level, therefore,

the metaphysical nature of the Perfect Human, according to Ibn 'Arabī, consists in him being a locus for the manifestation of God (as *Allāh* and as all the other 'most beautiful names') within the world. This, then, is what it means to be created "according to His form".

This is not all, however, for Ibn 'Arabī indicates not only that Adam encapsulates the names and attributes of God, but also that he is a microcosm of the wider cosmos.[21] The idea of man as a microcosm is one with ancient roots and different formulations, their common denominator being the notion that the human being, as the microcosm, "has certain features or principles in common with the macrocosmus or universe".[22] The idea made its way into the medieval Islamic philosophical tradition, and was developed most extensively in the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity and in Ismaili metaphysical thought,[23] which may be among the sources for Ibn 'Arabī's formulation of the idea, though the idea is also found in pre-Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thought, for instance in al-Ghazālī's *Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat* and *Miskhāt al-anwār*.[24] In those works, in fact, al-Ghazālī describes the microcosmic nature of the human being in remarkably similar terms to what we later find in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition. Thus in the *Miskhāt* he writes:

> He [namely, God] bestowed benefits upon Adam, for He gave him a summary form (*ṣūrah mukhtaṣarah*) that synthesised (*al-jāmi'ah li-*) all categories of what was in the world, to the extent that it was as if he was everything that was in the world, or a summary copy (*nuskhah ... mukhtaṣarah*) of what was in the world.[25]

In the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī alludes to the idea of the Perfect Human as a microcosm in various ways. For instance, he informs the reader that "the world, in the technical terminology of the [Sufi] folk (*iṣṭilāḥ al-qawm*), is called 'The Great Man' (*al-insān al-kabīr*)",[26] whereby, we can assume, the Perfect Human constitutes 'The Little Man'. Similarly, he indicates that the Perfect Human possesses "the universal nature (*al-ṭabī'ah al-kulliyyah*) that encompasses the receptacles of the whole world, high and low",[27] and that his "human nature (*insāniyyatuhu*)" consists in "his [human] constitution's (*nash'atuhu*) encompassing and comprising of all of the realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*)".[28] He makes the idea even more explicit in chapter 19 of the *Futūḥāt*:

> [The human being] is, in reality, a synthetic copy (*nuskhah jāmi'ah*), in the sense that there is within him something of the sky in one respect, and something of the earth in another respect, and something of everything in a certain respect. For the human being is, in reality, from among the totality of created beings. It is not said of him that he is the sky, or that he is the earth, or that he is the throne; rather, it is said of him that he is *like* the sky in this respect, and like the earth in that respect, and like the throne in another respect, and like the element of fire in this respect, and like wind in that respect, and like earth and water and everything on earth. So in this sense he is a copy, and is called "the human being" (*insān*), just as the sky is called "the sky" (*al-samā'*).[29]

There are therefore two aspects to the Perfect Human, in Ibn ʻArabī's view: the divine and the created, which is to say the aspect of the Perfect Human as a locus of divine manifestation (*maẓhar*) and the aspect of the Perfect Human as a microcosm (*ʻālam ṣaghīr*) of the entire cosmos. These two aspects complement one another: the Perfect Human is a microcosm of the cosmos because the cosmos is itself a locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes.

In light of this, we can say that the defining attribute of the Perfect Human, at the metaphysical level, is comprehensiveness or synthesis (*jamʻ*), for in his person he encompasses both the created and the divine. Thus in the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* Ibn ʻArabī refers to what he calls "the divine synthetic nature" (*al-jamʻiyyah al-ilāhiyyah*) of the Perfect Human,[30] and calls him a "synthetic being" (*kawn jāmiʻ*),[31] which he explains by reference to the idea that the Perfect Human "synthesises (*jamʻ*) two forms: the form of the world and the form of the Real (*ṣūrat al-ʻālam wa-ṣūrat al-ḥaqq*)". This dual nature, he further explains, derives from the fact that God "composed his outer form (*ṣūratahu al-ẓāhirah*) from the realities of the world and its forms (*min ḥaqāʼiq al-ʻālam wa-ṣuwarihi*) and composed his inner form (*ṣūratahu al-bāṭinah*) according to His form (*alá ṣūratihi*)".[32] Again, we find that he elaborates upon this idea in the *Futūḥāt*:

> When God had created the world, with the exception of the human being, that is, with the exception of His synthetic nature (*majmūʻihi*), He modelled his form (*ṣūratahu*) on the form of the whole world. Every part of the world, therefore, is in the form of the human being. And by "the world" (*al-ʻālam*) I mean everything other than God. Then He separated him from it after He had organised it. So the human being is identical to the organising command (*al-amr al-mudabbir*). Then He modelled his spirit (*maʻnawiyyan*) on the presence of the divine names (*ʻalá ḥadrat al-asmāʼ al-ilāhiyyah*), which appeared in him like images in a mirror appear to the viewer. Then He separated him from the presence of the divine names, after their faculties (*qiwá*) had taken form within him, such that he manifested them within his spirit (*rūḥ*) and inner self (*bāṭin*). So the outer aspect of the human being (*ẓāhir al-insān*) is created (*khalq*), and his inner aspect (*bāṭinuhu*) is divine (*ḥaqq*). And this is the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the goal (*al-maṭlūb*) [of creation?].[33]

Ibn ʻArabī's conception of the Perfect Human as a 'synthetic being' was taken on and developed by his leading interpreters and commentators (i.e. those from within what I call the Qūnawī tradition), who were generally more interested in the metaphysical status of the Perfect Human than in his nature as a 'Friend of God' or saint in this world (on which see below). To begin with, as already noted, according to the scheme of the 'five presences' put forward by the Qūnawī tradition, man – and the Perfect Human in particular – is commonly considered to be the final presence, the point being that he synthesises all of the higher presences within himself.[34] Thus Ibn ʻArabī's leading student Ṣadr al-Dīn

al-Qūnawī, in his *magnum opus*, *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jam' wa-al-wujūd*, describes the Perfect Human as "a synthesis of all the realities of the world, high and low (*majmū' ḥaqā'iq al-'ālam a'lāhi wa-asfalihi*)".[35] Similarly, and making direct reference to the five presences scheme, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, in his widely read *Muqaddimah* (introduction) to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, after stating that the five presences "are all divine books (*kutub ilāhiyyah*)", tells us that "the Perfect Human is a book that synthesises these aforementioned books because he is a copy (*nuskhah*) of the macrocosm (*al-ālam al-kabīr*)".[36]

Ibn 'Arabī's interpreters also recapitulate the idea of the Perfect Human as a synthetic being via certain key technical terms and images. The image of the Perfect Human as a comprehensive 'book' has just been mentioned. This image also appears in al-Qūnawī's *I'jāz al-bayān*,[37] and can be traced back to Ibn 'Arabī.[38] It is also connected to the depiction of the Perfect Human as a "copy" (*nuskhah*) and a "summary" (*mukhtaṣar*),[39] terms that we have already come across and which are already found in pre-Ibn 'Arabian Sufism, for instance in the work of al-Ghazālī.

Another of the most common ways in which Ibn 'Arabī's interpreters refer to the idea of the Perfect Human's synthesis of the created and the divine is through the important Ibn 'Arabian (and originally Qur'anic [see Q 23:100; 55:20]) concept of the *barzakh* or 'isthmus', "a term that represents an activity or an active entity that differentiates between two things and (paradoxically) through that very act of differentiation provides for their unity".[40] Thus in *al-Fukūk* (*The Breaking Open*), which is his summary of the central themes of the *Fuṣūṣ*, al-Qūnawī, writes:

> The true Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil al-ḥaqīqī*) is the isthmus (*al-barzakh*) between necessity (*al-wujūb*) [i.e. the existence of God, *wājib al-wujūd*] and contingency (*al-imkān*) [i.e. the existence of creation, *al-wujūd al-mumkin*], and the mirror that synthesises (*al-mir'āh al-jāmi'ah*) the attributes of eternity and its connecting principles, and the attributes of originated things, and the intermediary (*al-wāsiṭah*) between the Real and creation.[41]

Al-Qūnawī's student Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī puts the matter in a similar way in his commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tā'iyyah*:

> As for the isthmus (*al-barzakh*), which is, in reality, the origin of these aforementioned two sides [namely, *al-aḥadiyyah* and *al-wāḥidiyyah*] and that which affirms them and gives them their entities in the first instance, and synthesises (*al-jāmi'*) them in the second instance, it is the human reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-insāniyyah*), and it has two aspects: one of them is the aspect dominated by the effect of unity and comprehensiveness, and the other is that which is dominated by the effect of multiplicity and specification.[42]

To take another example, al-Qāshānī, in his commentary on the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, writes, "So man became an isthmus synthesising (*barzakhan*

jāmi'an) the categories of necessity and possibility (*al-wujūb wa-al-imkān*), just as the divine presence synthesises the essence and all of the names."[43] Related to *al-barzakh* is another Qur'anic term, 'the confluence of the two seas' (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) (see Q 18:60).[44] Thus al-Qāshānī's student al-Qayṣarī explains that Muhammad, in his capacity as the Perfect Human,

> encompasses through his outward aspect (*ẓāhir*), and through his inward aspect (*bāṭin*) the elect of the outer world (*al-'ālam al-ẓāhir*), such that he becomes the confluence of the two seas (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) and the locus of manifestation of the two worlds (*maẓhar al-'ālamayn*).[45]

It is clear from all of the above that, for both Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters in the Qūnawī tradition, the Perfect Human's 'synthetic' nature – that is to say, his being both a locus of the divine manifestation and a microcosm of the cosmos – is a central aspect – in fact, *the* essential feature – of his perfection. Unsurprisingly, this is also true for al-Jīlī, though as we shall see, at times he appears to put greater emphasis on the Perfect Human's divine aspect than on his created aspect.

Al-Jīlī's position

A 'synthetic being'

Just as the thinkers in the Qūnawī tradition identify the fifth presence – the presence of the Perfect Human – as the presence that synthesises all of the other presences – so too does al-Jīlī identify the fortieth level of existence – the level of the Perfect Human – as the level that synthesises all of the other levels. The Perfect Human's status as a 'synthetic being' is, I think, already alluded to in the title of al-Jīlī's work, which in its full form is *al-Insān al-kāmil fī ma'rifat al-awākhir wa-al-awā'il*. The title indicates that the Perfect Human is perfect insofar as he possesses perfect 'knowledge' (*ma'rifah*) of 'the first things and the last things' (*al-awākhir wa-al-awā'il*). This latter term seems to denote 'everything'; the similar term *'ilm al-awwalīn wa-al-ākharīn*, for instance, is used in the wider Islamic tradition to denote the knowledge contained in the Qur'an, which, in the traditional Islamic view, is *all* knowledge (see e.g. Q 6:38, 17:12).[46] The Perfect Human, it can therefore be said, knows all things, both metaphysical – the 'first things' – and this-worldly – the 'last things'. This comprehensive knowledge, as we shall see presently, is connected to the fact that the Perfect Human *is* – or at least, is a 'copy' or 'receptacle' of – all things.

Al-Jīlī sets out the idea of the 'synthetic' nature of the Perfect Human more explicitly in his discussion of the fortieth level of existence in *Marātib al-wujūd*:

> Through him [i.e. the Perfect Human] the levels [of existence] were completed (*bi-hi tammat al-marātib*) and the world was perfected (*wa-kumila al-'ālam*), and the Real appeared in His most perfect appearance, in accordance with His names and attributes … He is the one who synthesises the realities of

> the Real and the realities of creation (*al-jāmi' li-al-ḥaqā'iq al-haqqiyyah wa-al-ḥaqā'iq al-khalqiyyah*), in general and in detail, in terms of effect and existence, through the essence and the attributes, necessarily and accidentally, in reality and metaphorically. Everything that you see or hear in the external world is an expression of one of the subtleties of man (*raqīqah min raqā'iq al-insān*), or a number for one of his realities. For man is the Real, the essence, the attributes, the throne, the footstool, the tablet, the pen, the king, the jinn, the heavens, the stars, the two worlds and that which is in them, the lower world and the world to come, existence and what it encompasses, the Real and creation, the eternal and the originated.[47]

Like for Ibn 'Arabī and his leading interpreters, then, for al-Jīlī the Perfect Human is both a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes and a microcosm of the cosmos. He develops this further in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, which is specifically devoted to the idea of the Perfect Human. Al-Jīlī gives an indication of the Perfect Human's 'synthetic' nature, in fact, in the very title of that chapter, which refers to how "The Perfect Human … is a receptacle (*muqābil*) of the Real and creation (*muqābil li-al-ḥaqq wa-al-khalq*)." Al-Jīlī repeats and elaborates on this idea later in the chapter: "Know that the Perfect Human", he writes, "is a receptacle (*muqābil*) of all of the existential realities (*li-jamī' al-ḥaqā'iq al-wujūdiyyah*) in himself." By this al-Jīlī means that the Perfect Human is a microcosm of both God and creation: "He receives the higher realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-'alawiyyah*) in his subtle nature (*bi-laṭāfatihi*), and the lower realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-sufliyyah*) in his coarse nature (*bi-kathāfatihi*)."[48] He then proceeds to set out in detail how the different parts of the universe correspond to the different elements within man, or as al-Jīlī calls them, "subtleties" (*raqā'iq*). In Table 3.1 I have set out the correspondences that al-Jīlī identifies in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* between the different realities of the universe and the different elements – or as al-Jīlī calls them, "subtleties" (*raqā'iq*) – within man, the microcosm of the wider cosmos.

Al-Jīlī thus describes how almost all of the created levels of existence (as outlined in his *Marātib al-wujūd*), including those of the Qur'anic concepts (the throne, the footstool, the preserved tablet, the highest pen), the different 'orbits', the seven heavens, the four elements, and the different kinds of angels, animals, jinn, and humans, are embodied within one of the Perfect Human's faculties (*qiwá*), humours, body parts, or some other of his "subtleties".[49] Al-Jīlī's exposition of the specific correspondences in this manner between the created realities and the faculties and body parts of the Perfect Human is not without precedent in medieval Islamic thought, particularly in Ismaili literature.[50] In fact, Ibn 'Arabī himself wrote on the specific correspondences between the cosmos and the parts of the Perfect Human.[51] Nevertheless, in drawing up such a detailed list of correspondences, al-Jīlī's scheme does appear to be something of a new development in Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysical thought. Furthermore, whereas Ibn 'Arabī wrote that man was *like* (rather than identical to) the different components of the cosmos, al-Jīlī declares that the Perfect Human *is*

Table 3.1 The correspondences between the world and man

Created reality	*Correspondence in Man*
The Throne (*al-'arsh*)	His heart (*qalb*)
The Footstool (*al-kursī*)	His I-ness (*aniyyah*)
The Lote Tree of the Furthest Bounds (*sidrat al-muntahá*)	His station (*maqām*)
The Most Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'lá*)	His intellect (*'aql*)
The Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*)	His soul (*nafs*)
The Elements (*'anāṣir*)	His nature (*ṭab'*)
Primordial matter (*al-hayūlá*)	His receptivity (*qābiliyyah*)
The Dust (*al-habā'*)	The size of his body (*ḥayz haykalihi*)
The Satin Orbit (*al-falak al-aṭlasī*)	His opinion (*ra'y*)
The Stellar Orbit (*al-falak al-mukawkab*)	His perception (*mudrikah*)
The Seventh Heaven (*al-samā' al-sābi'ah*)	His spiritual aspiration (*himmah*)
The Sixth Heaven (*al-samā' al-sādisah*)	His conjectural faculty (*wahm*)
The Fifth Heaven (*al-samā' al-khāmisah*)	His concern (*hamm*)
The Fourth Heaven (*al-samā' al-rābi'ah*)	His understanding (*fahm*)
The Third Heaven (*al-samā' al-thālithah*)	His imagination (*khayāl*)
The Second Heaven (*al-samā' al-thāniyah*)	His thought (*fikr*)
The First Heaven (*al-samā' al-uwlá*)	His memory (*ḥāfiẓah*)
Saturn (*zuḥal*)	The faculties of touch (*al-qiwá al-lāmisah*)
Jupiter (*al-mushtarī*)	The defensive faculties (*al-qiwá al-dāfi'ah*)
Mars (*al-marīkh*)	The inviolable faculties (*al-qiwá al-muḥarramah*)
The Sun (*al-shams*)	The faculties of beholding (*al-qiwá al-nāẓirah*)
Venus (*al-zuhrah*)	The faculties of enjoyment (*al-qiwá al-muladhidhah*)
Mercury (*'uṭārid*)	The faculties of smell (*al-qiwá al-shāmmah*)
The Moon	The faculties of hearing (*al-qiwá al-sāmi'ah*)
The Orbit of Fire (*falak al-nār*)	His hotness (*ḥarārah*)
The Orbit of Water (*falak al-mā'*)	His coldness (*burūdah*)
Air (*al-hawā'*)	His wetness (*ruṭūbah*)
The Orbit of Earth (*falak al-turāb*)	His dryness (*buyūsah*)
The angels (*al-malā'ikah*)	His thoughts (*khawāṭir*)
The jinn and the devils (*al-jinn wa-al-shayāṭīn*)	His temptations (*wiswās*)
Cattle (*al-bahā'im*)	His animal nature (*ḥayawāniyyah*)
The lion (*al-asad*)	The forceful faculties (*al-qiwá al-bāṭishah*)
The fox (*al-tha'alab*)	The cunning faculties (*al-qiwá al-mākirah*)
The wolf (*al-dhi'b*)	The deceitful faculties (*al-qiwá al-khādi'ah*)
The bull (*al-fard*)	The envious faculties (*al-qiwá al-ḥāsidah*)
The mouse (*al-fa'r*)	The greedy faculties (*al-qiwá al-ḥarīṣah*)
The bird (*al-ṭayr*)	His spirituality (*rūḥāniyyah*)

Created reality	*Correspondence in Man*
Fire (*al-nār*)	Bile (*al-māddah al-ṣafrawiyyah*)
Water (*al-mā'*)	Phlegm (*al-māddah al-balghamiyyah*)
Wind (*al-rīḥ*)	Blood (*al-māddah al-damawiyyah*)
Earth (*al-turāb*)	Black bile (*al-māddah al-suwdawiyyah*)
The seven seas (*al-saba'ah al-abḥur*)	His saliva (*rīq*), sweat (*'arq*), bone marrow (*anqā'*), tears (*dam'*), *yūl* [?], and the seventh, which encompasses the rest, is the substance that flows between the blood, the sweat, and the skin.
The atom (*al-jawhar*)	His essence (*dhāt*) or 'ipseity'/identity (*huwiyyah*)
The accident (*al-'araḍ*)	His description (*waṣf*)
Inanimate objects (*al-jamādāt*)	His molars (*anyāb*)
The plant (*al-nabāt*)	His hair (*sha'r*) and nails (*ẓufur*)
The animal (*al-ḥayawān*)	His sensual nature (*shahwāniyyah*)
Sons of Adam like him (*mithluhu min al-Ādamiyyīn*)	His human nature (*bashariyyah*) and form (*ṣūrah*)
The king (*al-malik*)	His spirit (*rūḥ*)
The minister (*al-wazīr*)	His contemplative thought (*naẓar fikrī*)
The judge (*al-qāḍī*)	His knowledge derived from what he hears (*'ilm masmū'*) and judgment derived from what is impressed on him (*ra'y maṭbū'*)
The policeman (*al-shurṭī*)	His thinking (*ẓann*)
The servants (*al-a'wān*)	All of his veins (*'urūq*) and faculties (*qiwá*)
The believers (*al-mu'minīn*)	His certainty (*yaqīn*)
The polytheists (*al-mushrikīn*)	His doubt (*shakk*) and uncertainty (*rayb*)[1]

Notes

1 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 211–212. For al-Jīlī's exposition of these correspondences in poetry, see ibid., 36–37.

the heaven and the stars, etc. These subtle differences reflect al-Jīlī's broader tendency to elaborate upon, systematise, and make more explicit ideas found in the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition.

In keeping with the notion of the Perfect Human as a *kawn jāmi'*, al-Jīlī also indicates that the Perfect Human not only synthesises the created levels of existence, but is also what he calls (in emulation of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators) a "perfect copy" (*nuskhah kāmilah*) of God,[52] meaning that the higher, divine levels of existence are also manifest within him. Thus he tells us in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, "Know that the Perfect Human is he who deserves (*yastaḥiqq*) the essential names (*al-asmā' al-dhātiyyah*) and the divine attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-ilāhiyyah*) on account of his original nature (*aṣālah*)."[53] All of the names and attributes, in other words, including those of the divine essence – e.g. God (*allāh*), the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), the One (*al-aḥad*), the Unique (*al-fard*), names which properly speaking belong to God alone – and of the divine self – that is,

the Living (*al-ḥayy*), the Knowing (*al-ʿalīm*), the Willing (*al-murīd*), and the Powerful (*al-qādir*) – are manifest in the Perfect Human.[54] Hence

> he is a reflection (*mithāl*) of the Real like the reflection in a mirror, without which an individual cannot see his form … for the Real – May He be exalted – made things such that His names and attributes could not been seen except within the Perfect Human.[55]

As a divine *maẓhar*, then, the Perfect Human enjoys what al-Jīlī calls "the joy of divinity (*ladhdhat al-ulūhiyyah*)".[56] In chapters 12 to 15 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, meanwhile, al-Jīlī gives a more detailed exposition of the idea, setting out how the Friend of God (*al-walīy*)[57] receives first the manifestation of the divine acts (*tajallī al-afʿāl*), then the manifestations of the divine names (*tajallī al-asmāʾ*) – from the least to the most specific – then the manifestations of the divine attributes (*tajallī al-ṣifāt*) – from the most to the least specific – and finally becomes the locus of manifestation of the essence itself (*majlá al-dhāt*).[58]

While al-Jīlī therefore follows the earlier Ibn ʿArabian tradition in conceiving of the Perfect Human as a divine *maẓhar* and a microcosm of the cosmos, there is a sense, I think, in which he goes further than those earlier thinkers in laying emphasis on the divine aspect of the Perfect Human. This can already be discerned in his suggestion that the Perfect Human possesses 'the joy of divinity' and is a locus of manifestation of the divine essence and the names of the essence (as well as the other names and attributes). It comes out most clearly, however, in chapter 34 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, which is devoted to the Qur'an. In that chapter, al-Jīlī not only appears to blur the divine essence with the essence of Muhammad (an issue that we will look at later in this book), but also indicates that the revelation of the Qur'an is connected to a transformation within the Perfect Human from a human to a quasi-divine being:

> So if you were to say, "What is the benefit of [Muhammad] saying: 'He sent down the Qur'an to me as a single whole'?" we would say, "That [benefit] has two aspects. The first aspect is with respect to the effect (*al-ḥukm*), because the Perfect Servant (*al-ʿabd al-kāmil*), if God manifests Himself to Him through His Essence, is affected (*yuḥkam*) by what he witnesses (*yashhad*), which is that he is the whole (*jumlah*) of the essence that does not end, and that it [the essence] has descended upon him without leaving its locus (*maḥall*), which is its rank (*al-makānah*). The second aspect is with respect to the exhaustion of the remnants of humanness (*istīfāʾ baqāyāt al-bashariyyah*), and the complete disappearance of the traces of createdness (*iḍmiḥlāl al-rusūm al-khalqiyyah*), due to the appearance of the divine realities (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-ilāhiyyah*), through their [leaving their] effects (*āthār*) on every limb of the body (*kull ʿaḍw min aʿḍāʾ al-jism*). So the whole (*al-jumlah*) is connected to his saying [i.e. the hadith] according to this second aspect, and its meaning is the passing away of all of the defects of createdness (*dhahāb jumlat al-naqāʾiṣ al-khalqiyyah*) through the attainment of realisation of the divine realities (*al-taḥaqquq bi-al-ḥaqāʾiq al-ilāhiyyah*)."[59]

Al-Jīlī's description of the effacement of 'the Perfect Servant's' humanness (*bashariyyah*) here seems to elevate the Perfect Human to quasi-divine status, to an extent not found in the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition.[60] It is a view, in fact, that sails extremely close to the wind of acceptable Islamic opinion, given the Qur'an's insistence that Muhammad is "only a human (*bashar*) like you" (Q 18:110, 41:6).[61] The radicalism of al-Jīlī's position in this respect becomes clear if we compare it to al-Qayṣarī's discussion of the Muhammadan Reality (on which see more below) in his *Muqaddimah*. The Muhammadan Reality, he tells us, does possess the attribute of lordship (*al-rubūbiyyah*), yet

> this lordship is only from the perspective of its being Real [i.e. its divine aspect] (*ḥaqqiyatihā*), not from the perspective of its humanness (*al-bashariyyah*), for from that [latter] perspective it is a lorded-over servant (*'abd marbūb*) who is in need of his Lord.[62]

Similarly, where al-Jīlī writes of the passing away of the Perfect Human's created defects (*naqā'iṣ*), al-Qayṣarī positively affirms them: "His imperfections (*naqā'iṣ*) are also perfections (*kamālāt*) from another perspective, which is known to those whose hearts and inward aspects have been enlightened by the divine light."[63] Far from being effaced, therefore, for al-Qayṣarī (and for Ibn 'Arabī and his other leading interpreters)[64] the Perfect Human's humanity is one half of his nature; indeed, it is necessary in order for him to be a *kawn jāmi'* who synthesises the created and the divine. Far from disappearing in a process of spiritualisation, the Perfect Human's humanness, in al-Qayṣarī's view, is therefore an integral part of his nature and function. Similarly, al-Jīlī's position can usefully be contrasted with that of the famous philosopher of history Ibn Khaldūn who, adopting something like the philosophical conception of prophethood developed by al-Fārābī (d. 950/951) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037),[65] explains that the prophet, in attaining a pure form of perception and intellection (*idrāk ṣarf wa-ta'aqqul maḥḍ*),[66] undergoes "the complete casting off (*al-insilākh*) of humanness (*al-bashariyyah*), both bodily and spiritual, for [the station of] the angels (*al-malā'ikah*)".[67] While Ibn Khaldūn therefore shares with al-Jīlī the idea that the prophet casts off his humanness, nevertheless the great North African thinker limits the prophet's attainment to the angelic, rather than divine, level.

Though it is true, as we have seen, that al-Jīlī follows the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition in viewing the Perfect Human as a synthetic being who unites the divine and created levels of existence and, as we shall see presently, that he does not totally neglect the human aspect of Muhammad as the Perfect Human, it seems that ultimately what is most important for him is the Perfect Human's utterly unique connection with God Himself, a connection so strong that at times the two seem to blur into one, in the manner of the highly controversial Sufi al-Ḥallāj's (d. 922) designation of Muhammad as "Him [namely, God] Himself" (*huwa huwa*).[68] This blurring of Muhammad with the divine in al-Jīlī's thought was in fact already recognised back in 1900 by Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), who was not only an innovative thinker and poet in his own right, but also a perceptive interpreter of

medieval Islamic metaphysical thought. In an early article on "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as Expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani [=al-Jīlī]", Iqbal remarked that, with his idea of the Perfect Human, al-Jīlī "reproduces the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, except that his god-man is Muhammad instead of Christ".[69] Yet unlike in the Christian doctrine, according to which – in its orthodox Chalcedonian form – Christ is said to be both fully human and fully divine, al-Jīlī, as we have seen, indicates that the humanity of Muhammad is somehow effaced amidst the divine manifestation within him. In taking this view, al-Jīlī does seem to be both transgressing the limits of Islamic orthodoxy and embarking on a new stage in the idea of the Perfect Human within the Ibn ʻArabian tradition. We shall have occasion to consider this point again throughout the remainder of this book.

Miracles and Sinlessness

What are the implications of the Perfect Human being a 'synthetic being'? How, in other words, does this exalted, even quasi-divine status translate into the Perfect Human's nature in this world? In answer to this question, we will focus on two particular aspects of al-Jīlī's conception of the Perfect Human's this-worldly nature, namely, the Perfect Human's capacity to perform miracles, and his sinlessness.

The Perfect Human's ability to perform miracles follows on from him being a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes. In orthodox Ashʻarite theology, a miracle is defined as an event in which God breaks with His normal custom (*kharq al-ʻādah*), which otherwise is what gives order to the events that take place in the world.[70] If God has the ability to break with His custom, that is, to perform miracles, therefore, then it follows that those individuals in whom His names and attributes are perfectly manifest would also have that power. Al-Jīlī indicates this on several occasions in *al-Insān al-kāmil*. For instance, in the chapter on the Psalms, after discussing the Qur'anic motif of David and Solomon's miraculous ability to understand 'the speech of the birds' (*manṭiq al-ṭayr*) (see Q 27:16), he writes:

> Each one of the "Unique Ones" (*afrād*) and "Poles" (*aqṭāb*) possesses mastery (*al-taṣarruf*) over the whole of the existential kingdom (*al-mamlakah al-wujūdiyyah*), and each of them knows what trembles (*ikhtalaja*) day and night, besides the languages of the birds. Al-Shiblī – May God have mercy upon him – has said, "Were a black ant (*namlah suwdāʼ*) to crawl over a solid rock on a dark night, and I weren't to hear it (*lam asmaʻhā*), I would say, 'I have been deceived or duped (*innī makhdūʻ aw mamkūr bihi*).'" And another person said, "I wouldn't say, 'and I weren't to feel it (*lam ashʻarhā*)', because it is not possible for it to crawl except through my power, since I am the one who moves it (*muḥarrikuhā*). So how could I say that I do not feel it, when I am the one who moves it?"[71]

As we shall see, the 'Unique Ones' and 'Poles' are key terms in the Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysical lexicon, where they denote those individuals who stand at the

highest levels of the spiritual hierarchy, that is, the hierarchy of 'Friends of God' (*awliyā'*).[72] For al-Jīlī, in fact, the 'Pole' is synonymous with the Perfect Human.[73] Consequently, we can apply everything that he tells us about the Poles in this passage to the Perfect Human.

Al-Jīlī tells us here that all of the Perfect Humans possess "mastery" (*taṣarruf*) over "the existential kingdom" (*al-mamlakah al-wujūdiyyah*). Both in the Ibn 'Arabian lexicon and in medieval Islamic thought more broadly, the term *taṣarruf* can denote, among other things, the power to perform miracles (*karāmāt*).[74] This usage was adopted by al-Jīlī. In his commentary on chapter 559 of Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*, for instance, he discusses the "mastery of the Friends of God" (*taṣrīf al-awliyā'*), who, like God, can bring things into existence, simply by uttering the word, "Be!" (*kun*).[75] These miraculous powers of the Perfect Humans, al-Jīlī indicates in the passage under discussion, are applied within what he calls "the existential kingdom". Though this is not a common term in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī or his interpreters, al-Jīlī included, it seems that al-Jīlī is using it here to denote the world of phenomenal existence. The miracle-working of the Perfect Humans, in other words, applies not just in the 'world of imagination' (*'ālam al-khayāl*), but actually to the lower world as well. This supposition is supported by the quotations from the famous classical Baghdadi Sufi Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 945) and another anonymous figure, which indicate that the powers of *taṣarruf* apply to this world.[76]

Those quotations are also significant in that they give some indication of the nature and extent of the Perfect Human's miraculous powers. Put simply, they indicate that these miraculous powers are a result of the Perfect Human being a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes, a point that al-Jīlī in fact makes explicit in chapter 14, on 'The Manifestation of the Attributes' (*tajallī al-ṣifāt*):

> From this manifestation [namely, the manifestation of the divine attributes] come the miraculous powers of the People of Aspiration (*taṣarrufāt ahl al-himam*); and from this manifestation comes the world of imagination (*'ālam al-khayāl*) and the strange, wondrous inventions (*gharā'ib 'ajā'ib al-mukhtara'āt*) that take form within it; and from this manifestation comes exalted magic (*al-siḥr al-'ālī*); and from this manifestation things take on whatever colour (*yatalawwan*) the People of Paradise (*ahl al-jannah*) want, and from this manifestation come the wonders of the sesame seed (*'ajā'ib al-samsamah*) that was left over from the clay of Adam, which Ibn al-'Arabī mentioned in his book;[77] and from this manifestation comes walking upon the water (*al-mashī 'alá al-mā'*) and flying through the air (*al-ṭayrān fī al-hawā'*) and making the little much and the much little (*ja'l al-qalīl kathīran wa-al-kathīr qalīlan*), and other miraculous breakings [of the natural order] (*khawāriq*).[78]

Returning to the passage from the chapter on the Psalms, then, the statement attributed to al-Shiblī indicates the manifestation of one of the divine attributes

in the Perfect Human: specifically, it suggests that the Perfect Human hears everything in this world, and is therefore a locus of manifestation of the divine attribute of 'hearing' (*al-sam'*) – that is, not just ordinary hearing, but the divine capacity to hear *everything*; hence the use of the trope of the black ant crawling over a solid rock on a dark night, which is often used in classical Sufi literature to denote that which is almost totally concealed.[79] The statement made by the anonymous figure, meanwhile, is a commentary upon – and 'correction' of – the saying attributed to al-Shiblī. In effect, the anonymous speaker is criticising al-Shiblī for his lack of consistency – or, perhaps more accurately, for not going far enough – in his explanation of the manifestation of the attributes of God in man. This second speaker's statement, then, goes so far as to claim that the Perfect Human is the cause of all events in the phenomenal world, a power that in orthodox Ash'arite theology is assigned to God. In this sense, the statement is claiming for the Perfect Human the divine attribute of 'power' (*al-qudrah*).[80] Both the names 'The All-Hearing' and 'The Powerful', it should be remembered, are among the seven 'names of the divine self' (*al-asmā' al-nafsiyyah*).

Al-Jīlī in fact makes the notion that the Perfect Human has the ability to perform miracles within the phenomenal world on account of being a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes even clearer later on in *al-Insān al-kāmil* in the chapter on 'The Signs of the Hour' (*ashrāṭ al-sā'ah*) (chapter 61):

> The Real – Glory be to Him and may He be exalted – is existent (*mawjūd*) in the human being, without indwelling (*bi-ghayr ḥulūl*). So if He makes His effects appear, and the servant achieves realisation (*taḥaqqaqa*) of the reality of "I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he hits, and his foot by which he walks" then the Real – May He be exalted – appears in the existence of this human being, and he becomes capable of mastery (*al-taṣarruf*) within the world of beings (*'ālam al-akwān*).[81]

The *ḥadīth qudsī* quoted here – 'I am his hearing by which he hears, etc.' – is a favourite scriptural text of many Sufi authors, Ibn 'Arabī included, for it evokes the manifestation of the divine attributes in the individual who has attained proximity to God through acts of devotion.[82] More specifically, and significantly for our purposes here, the hadith indicates the manifestation of several of the names/attributes of the divine self (*al-asmā'/al-ṣifāt al-nafsiyyah*) in those individuals who have attained perfection. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude, based on the two passages just quoted, that the Perfect Human's miraculous power of 'mastery' consists in his ability to manifest the seven attributes of the divine self – that is, the divine life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, speech, and sight – within the phenomenal world.[83]

This is not to say, however, that in al-Jīlī's view the miraculous powers of the Perfect Human are *limited* to the manifestation of these seven attributes. That he conceives of the miracles of the Perfect Human in a more expansive sense is

demonstrated by his assignment to the Perfect Human of the miraculous powers traditionally assigned in Islamic literature to Jesus. Thus in the chapter on 'The Holy Spirit' (*al-rūḥ al-quds*) (chapter 50), al-Jīlī explains that the Perfect Human so perfectly manifests the divine attributes that

> when he touches something with his hand (*idhā masaḥa bi-yadihi*), he heals the blind and the leper (*abra'a al-akmah wa-al-abraṣ*), and when his tongue utters the creation of a thing (*takwīn shay'*), this occurs through the command of God – May He be exalted. And he is supported by the Holy Spirit.[84]

There is clearly an unstated allusion here to Jesus,[85] who possesses these same miraculous powers in the Qur'anic account (see Q 3:49), as well as in the New Testament. The reference in chapter 14 to "walking upon the water", quoted above, is also evidently a reference to one of Jesus' miracles.[86] The point, however, is not that Jesus is the true Perfect Human (as we shall see, al-Jīlī reserves this status for another Qur'anic prophet – Muhammad). Rather, it is that the Perfect Human possesses the divine powers of healing and creation.[87] In simple terms, this is because the Perfect Human is a locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes. As al-Jīlī puts it in later in *al-Insān al-kāmil*:

> [The Messengers] made manifest decisive miracles (*al-mu'jizāt al-qāṭi'ah*) and brought restraining signs, and they did not leave out a single kind of miraculous break in the customary order of things (*kharq al-'awā'id*), which created beings are never able to perform, except through a divine power (*qudrah ilāhiyyah*). These included reviving the dead, healing the blind and the leper, and splitting the sea.[88]

It is because they are loci of divine manifestation, then, that the Perfect Humans are able to perform miracles.

Another consequence of the Perfect Human being a locus of divine manifestation is that he is free from sin. Sin and evil, which have received relatively little attention in the modern academic study of Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thought, are important topics in al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil*. In particular, al-Jīlī devotes chapter 59 – 'On the soul (*al-nafs*), which is the portion of Satan and those who follow him from among the devils of the people of delusion' – to the subject of the sinfulness of humanity. It is notable that al-Jīlī's treatment of sin (and the Perfect Human's sinlessness) comes immediately prior to his treatment of the idea of the Perfect Human in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* – an indication, perhaps, of the relevance of the theme of sin to his conception of the Perfect Human.

Elaborating upon the Biblical and Qur'anic theme of the Fall, al-Jīlī describes in chapter 59 how the 'soul' (*nafs*) of Adam encouraged him to eat the 'grain' (*ḥabbah*) in the Garden, "because it was created from the essence of lordship (*makhlūqah min dhāt al-rubūbiyyah*), and it is not in lordship's nature to remain beneath a restriction (*taḥt ḥajr*)".[89] In a sense, then, for al-Jīlī it was the divine

origin of humanity that led it into original sin (whereas, in the Genesis account, it was the temptation to "be like God" [see Gen. 3:4]).[90] The consequence of this original sin, al-Jīlī goes on, was mankind's "fall" (*nuzūl*) from the Garden "into the abode of elemental darkness (*al-ẓulmah al-ṭabī'iyyah*)". This 'elemental darkness', he tells us later in the chapter, "is the very same as that which leads [people] to the Fire; indeed, it is the very same as the Fire".[91] In spiritual terms, meanwhile,

> the fall is nothing but this, namely the turning of [the soul's] face away from the higher world (*al-'ālam al-'ulwī*), which is above and beyond limitation and restriction (*munazzah 'an al-qayd wa-al-ḥaṣr*), and towards the elemental lower world (*al-'ālam al-suflī al-ṭabī'ī*), which is [a state of being] in captivity (*taḥt al-asar*).[92]

Human beings, as al-Jīlī sees it, are therefore trapped in a state of confusion (*al-iltibās*) and misery (*al-shaqāwah*).[93] Evil and sin are therefore a real and present part of human nature in al-Jīlī's view. Moreover, he believes that the presence of sin in the world and in human nature – the origin of which, as we have just seen, is humanity's aversion to 'restriction' – is exacerbated by the existence of Satan (*Iblīs*). Particularly notable in this regard is al-Jīlī's belief that Satan possesses 'loci of manifestation' (*maẓāhir*) that serve as a kind of evil counterpart to God's loci of manifestation:

> Know that within existence Satan has ninety-nine loci of manifestation, in accordance with the number of the most beautiful names of God – May He be exalted. And within those loci of manifestation he has innumerable varieties (*tanawwu'āt*), a comprehensive explanation of all of which would take us too long. So let us suffice with [mentioning] seven loci of manifestation which are the "mothers" (*ummuhāt*) of all those loci of manifestation, just as the seven names of God's self (*al-sab'ah al-nafsāniyyah min asmā' Allāh*) are the mothers of all His most beautiful names.[94]

These loci of manifestation, then, are traps into which people may fall. Below, I have listed the seven 'mothers' of Satan's loci of manifestation, along with al-Jīlī's description of how Satan seduces a particular class of people within the *maẓhar* in question:

1 The lower world (*al-dunyā*) and what springs from it, like the planets (*al-kawākib*), the elements (*al-istiqṣāt wa-al-'anāṣir*), etc.:

> [Satan appears] within these loci of manifestation to the unbelievers and the polytheists (*al-kuffār wa-al-mushrikīn*). He first seduces them (*yaghwīhim*) with the adornments and trinkets of the lower world (*zaynat al-dunyā wa-zakhārifihā*), until he takes away their intellects (*'uqūl*) and blinds their hearts (*qulūb*). Then he guides them to the mysteries of

> the planets (*asrār al-kawākib*) and the origins of the elements (*uṣūl al-'anāṣir*), etc., and says to them that they are the agents within existence. So they worship the orbits (*ya'budūn al-aflāk*)[95] … and do not believe in resurrection (*qiyāmah*) or anything else [of the fundamentals of religion]. So they kill each other and plunder one another, having been submerged in the seas of the darkness of their elemental natures. And there will never, ever be any salvation (*khalāṣ*) for them. Satan does the same with the people [who believe in the divinity] of the elements (*ahl al-'anāṣir*) … and the same with the fire-worshippers (*'abadat al-nār*) … He does this with all of the polytheists.[96]

2 Elemental nature (*al-ṭabī'ah*), sensual desires (*al-shahwāt*), and pleasures (*al-lidhdhāt*):

> [Satan] appears within them [namely, these loci of manifestation] to the common Muslims (*al-muslimīn al-'awāmm*). He first seduces them (*yaghwīhim*) with the love of sensual things (*maḥabbat al-umūr al-shahwāniyyah*) and the desire for bestial pleasures (*al-lidhdhāt al-ḥayawāniyyah*), which are entailed by [humanity's] elemental nature, until he blinds them. At that moment, he appears to them within the lower world, and informs them that they can only obtain these desired things in the lower world. So they become completely absorbed in their love for them and continue desiring them. And when he does this with them he [then] leaves them, for he does not need to treat them after this, since if they become his followers, they do not disobey him in anything that he commands them to do, due to the similarity between ignorance and love of the world. So if he were to command them not to believe in God (*al-kufr*), they would not believe in Him. And at that moment he enters upon them, bringing doubt (*al-shakk*) and whispering (*al-wiswās*) about hidden matters that God has informed [us] about. And so he casts them into irreligion (*al-ilḥād*), and that is the end of the matter.[97]

3 Righteous deeds (*al-a'māl al-ṣāliḥīn*):

> [Satan] adorns (*yazīn*) their deeds for them [namely, the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*)], so that pride (*al-'ujb*) enters them. And when he makes pride in themselves and in their deeds enter them, he beguiles them (*gharrahum*) with the state that they are in, so they accept no advice from a person of knowledge … So they do fewer [righteous] deeds, and begin to relax, and they self-aggrandise and look down on people. Then … he makes acts of disobedience (*al-ma'āṣī*) enter them, one after another, and says to them, "Do whatever you want, for God is forgiving, merciful, and God does not punish anyone, God spares the aged, God is generous (*karīm*), and God forbid that 'The Generous' demand His

right", and things like that, until he transfers them from the state of righteousness (*al-ṣalāḥ*) that they were in into sinfulness (*al-fisq*), and at that moment the calamity (*al-balā'*) befalls them – God protect us from it.[98]

4 Intentions (*al-niyyāt*) and superiority over others according to deeds (*al-tafāḍul bi-al-a'māl*):

> [Satan] appears within them to the martyrs (*al-shuhadā'*). He corrupts (*yufsid*) their intentions in order to corrupt their deeds. So while one of them acts for the sake of God – May He be exalted – he smuggles a devil into his thoughts, saying to him, "Your deeds are excellent, and people look at you in order to take you as their model." And if he is not able to put hypocrisy (*al-riyā'*) and [concern for his] reputation (*al-sam'ah*) into him, such that it is said that this man is "so-and-so", then he enters him through revelation, then comes to him when he is performing a deed. For example, when he is reciting the Qur'an, he says to him, "Go and make the pilgrimage to the inviolate House of God and recite on your way whatever you want, so that you can join together the rewards of the pilgrimage and recitation", with the result that he gets him out on the road. Then he says to him, "Be like [other] people. You are now a traveller, so you don't have to recite [the Qur'an]." So he abandons his recitation and this is an evil omen. For he may forget the mandatory obligations that have been written down (*al-farā'iḍ al-mafrūḍah al-maktūbah*), and he may not make the pilgrimage, and he may be too preoccupied with seeking sustenance to perform all of his religious rites (*manāsik*).[99]

5 Knowledge (*al-'ilm*):

> [Satan] appears within it to the scholars (*al-'ulamā'*). And there is nothing easier for Satan than to seduce them with knowledge. It is said that he says, "By God, a thousand scholars are easier for me [to seduce] than one illiterate person of strong faith (*ummī qawwīy al-īmān*)." For he [namely, the illiterate person] becomes perplexed when he is seduced. This is in contrast to the scholar, for he [namely, Satan] speaks to him and offers proofs (*yastadill*) to him in accordance with what the scholar knows to be true. So [the scholar] follows him and is seduced in that way … And he has very many ways of [doing] this. Indeed they are innumerable and without limit, and no one is safe from him, except for the "Single Ones among Men", "the Unique Ones" (*āḥād al-rijāl al-afrād*).[100]

6 Customs (*al-'ādāt*) and the quest for comforts (*ṭalab al-rāḥāt*):

> [Satan appears within these loci of manifestation] to the truthful [Sufi] aspirants (*al-murīdīn al-ṣādiqīn*). For he takes them into the darkness of

nature, with respect to their customs and their quest for comfort, until he takes from them their power of aspiration (*quwwat al-himam*) in their quest, and their intensity of desire in their worship. And if those are made nothing, then they return to their base selves, so he creates, through them, that which he creates through others who do not have their will (*irādah*). So nothing is more feared by the aspirants than the seeking of comforts and the resort to customs.[101]

7 Divine forms of knowledge (*al-ma'ārif al-ilāhiyyah*):

> [Satan appears within these loci of manifestation to] "the Truthful Ones" (*al-ṣiddīqīn*), and the Friends of God (*al-awliyā'*) and the gnostics (*al-'ārifīn*), save for those whom God – May He be exalted – protects (*ḥafaẓa*). As for Those Brought Near [to God] (*al-muqarrabūn*), he has no way to them. The first way he appears to them [namely, the others] is in the divine reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-ilāhiyyah*). So he says to them, "Is it not true that God is the reality of the entirety of existence, and that you are among [the things of] existence, such that the Real is your reality?" And they say, "Yes." So he says to them, "Then why do you not follow yourselves in these deeds that those who imitate you are doing?" So they abandon righteous deeds. And when they abandon those deeds he says to them, "Do whatever you want, because God – May He be exalted – is your reality, so you are Him, and He is not questioned about what He does." So they fornicate, and steal, and drink wine, until all of that leads to them taking off the noose of Islam and faith from their necks, through [embracing] atheism (*al-zandaqah*) and irreligion (*al-ilḥād*).[102]

It seems, therefore, that Satan has ways of deceiving all kinds of people, including not only the unbelievers, but also righteous Muslims, martyrs, scholars, aspiring Sufis and even the 'Friends of God' and the 'gnostics', whom Satan in fact seduces by exploiting their very knowledge of the Sufi metaphysical truth of universal theophany. Evidently, in al-Jīlī's worldview the evil put about by Satan is a tremendously powerful force that few are able to escape. Indeed, later in the chapter he writes, "If we were to begin to explain his various appearances, in their entirety, in a single one of these seven loci of manifestation, we would fill many volumes."[103] This, then, is the other side to the story of universal theophany. Just as God is manifest everywhere, so too is Satan and the evil that he embodies and disseminates. This idea perhaps calls into question the notion, often put about by the *sharī'ah*-minded opponents of this type of Sufi thought (and some modern scholars), that Ibn 'Arabian Sufism encourages a kind of ethical relativism,[104] for in al-Jīlī's view, at least, it is humanity's ethical duty to attempt to escape Satan's often remarkably cunning and alluring attempts at seduction. It also casts doubt on the widespread notion that Ibn 'Arabian Sufism advocates a kind of absolute

'monism', that is, the idea that "all is God",[105] and that evil is merely a privation, that is, an absence of being.[106] Al-Jīlī, by contrast, seems here to depict a dualistic, almost Manichaean state of affairs, in which Satan competes with God to make himself manifest in the phenomenal world.

Yet far from being an innovation within Sufi thought, his strong sense of the reality of evil – and the connection that he draws between this evil, Satan, and the human soul (*nafs*) – picks up on the widespread tendency in earlier Sufi thought to see the soul – particularly that aspect of it which the Qur'an describes as "the soul that is prone to evil (*al-nafs la-ammārah bi-al-sū'*)" (Q 12:53) – as the source of evil deeds within the human being, which needs to be overcome through Sufi training (*riyāḍah*) and repentance (*tawbah*) – the famous 'greater jihad' (*al-jihād al-akbar*).[107] Ibn 'Arabī himself also discusses Satan, evil, and the defects of the soul. In chapter 16 of the *Futūḥāt*, for instance, he describes how Satan (*al-shayṭān*) approaches man from the four directions (*al-jihāt al-arba'*) – the right, the left, the back, and the front – and how it is man's task to ward off his advances from each of these four directions, through adherence to the prescriptions of the religious law.[108] Similarly, in chapter 337 of the same work, Ibn 'Arabī explains that Satan commands man to fall into unbelief, and that "man is punished for his unbelief (*kufr*), when he does evil (*ẓalama*) by accepting what Satan has brought and rejecting what the Messenger has brought".[109] To cite one final example, in chapter 267, 'On knowledge of the soul (*al-nafs*), which in their [namely, the Sufis'] usage is those attributes of the individual which are defective (*ma'lūl*), in their technical terminology', Ibn 'Arabī indicates that he shares the earlier Sufis' view of the soul as, in one sense at least, a "problem to be overcome".[110] His description of the soul in both the chapter heading and the first sentence of the chapter as the "defective" (*ma'lūl*) – and, later on, "reprehensible" (*madhmūm*) – part of the human being in fact directly echoes the description of the soul in classical Sufi sources.[111] Al-Qushayrī, for instance, tells us that, "By the soul they [namely, the Sufis] mean those attributes of the individual that are defective (*ma'lūl*) and those traits and deeds that are reprehensible (*madhmūm*)."[112] It seems wrong, then, to think of Ibn 'Arabian Sufism as somehow unconcerned with evil in contrast to earlier Sufi thought. As in other instances, therefore, al-Jīlī's innovation appears to be that he expresses this notion in a more systematic and unambiguous manner.

While Satan's power is apparently great in al-Jīlī's view, therefore, and his manifestations all around us, al-Jīlī does indicate that some individuals are able to elude Satan's grasp. Significantly for our purposes, it seems that such an individual, in al-Jīlī's view, is the Perfect Human, who is thereby set apart from the rest of humanity. Al-Jīlī gives the reader a clue in this respect earlier in the chapter when he writes, citing Qur'an 95:4–6:

> So everyone perishes (*halaka al-jamī'*), except for the "Single Ones" (*al-āḥād*). This is the mystery of His saying: "We created humanity in the best of forms; then We sent him down to the lowest of the low; except for those who believed and those who did works of righteousness."[113]

Al-Jīlī repeats this point on a number of occasions in the passages quoted above. When he refers to how Satan has no way of deceiving the 'Single Ones among Men, the Unique Ones' (*āḥād al-rijāl al-afrād*)' and 'Those Brought Near' (*al-muqarrabūn*), it is surely the Perfect Humans whom he has in mind, for as we shall see in the chapter on the 'Pole', these are among the titles given to those at the very top of the spiritual hierarchy in the Ibn 'Arabian lexicon.

Indeed, later in the chapter al-Jīlī indicates not only that the Perfect Humans are immune from Satan's temptations, but also that they are able to use Satan's attempts at deceiving them to positive effect; in Nassim Nicholas Taleb's terms, they are "antifragile":[114]

> [Satan] appears to [people] in every locus of forgetfulness and every exalted description, and no one recognises him except the Single Ones among the Friends of God (*āḥād al-awliyā'*). For when a Friend of God recognises him, the thing that he wanted to seduce him with becomes a gift (*hidāyah*) to the gnostic, through which he draws nearer (*yataqarrab*) to the divine presence.[115]

There are several indications in chapter 59 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, therefore, of the sinlessness of the Perfect Human, a sinlessness that is made the more remarkable by al-Jīlī's insistence that all other kinds of people are deceived by Satan into sinful behaviour.

A similar conclusion about the sinlessness of the Perfect Human can be drawn from elsewhere in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, namely the passage quoted above where al-Jīlī describes the passing away of the Perfect Human's 'humanness' (*bashariyyah*). In chapter 50 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, which is devoted to the Holy Spirit, al-Jīlī tells us that *bashariyyah* "entails the sensual desires (*al-shahwāt*) upon which this [human] body (*jasad*) is based, and the things to which [his] nature (*ṭab'*) is accustomed", the individual's task being to pass beyond this "base humanness" (*ḥaḍīḍ al-bashariyyah*) and attain a state of "spirituality" (*rūḥiyyah*).[116] The term *bashariyyah* (which we have already seen used in the context of the Perfect Human's attainment of quasi-divine status) is therefore connected here with the sinfulness of human nature, *shahwah* being a Qur'anic term associated with an unhealthy desire for food, material possessions, and (illicit) sex.[117] To say, therefore, that all remnants of the *bashariyyah* of the Perfect Human pass away is to indicate, at least on one level, the ethical purification of that individual.

All of this amounts to a doctrine of the sinlessness and infallibility (*'iṣmah*) of the Perfect Human. The idea of *'iṣmah* has its roots in Shi'i thought, where it is traditionally applied to the Imams. By al-Jīlī's time, however, the doctrine of the infallibility of the *prophets* – and in particular of the Prophet Muhammad – had become orthodoxy in Ash'arite Sunni theology, albeit that there was some debate over whether the sinlessness of the prophets began with or predated their prophetic mission.[118] Since, as we shall see, al-Jīlī identifies the Perfect Humans in one sense with the prophets, it would therefore have been a short move for him to make to assign sinlessness to them. Ibn 'Arabī in fact had already declared in the *Futūḥāt* that "it is among the conditions of the 'Hidden Imam'

(*al-imām al-bāṭin*) to be infallible (*ma'ṣūm*), but not of the 'Apparent' [Imam]",[119] in the context of an attack on the Shi'i conception of the Imamate. As is typical of his approach, in *al-Insān al-kāmil* al-Jīlī both makes this Ibn 'Arabian idea more explicit and introduces new elements into the discussion. The effect of this is that he presents us with an unambiguous conception of the Perfect Human as a sinless individual within a sinful world.

Notes

1 See G. Böwering and Y. Casewit, *A Qur'an Commentary by Ibn Barrajān of Seville (d. 536/1141): Īḍāḥ al-ḥikma bi-aḥkām al-'ibra (Wisdom Deciphered, the Unseen Discovered)* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 40–43; Y. Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barrajān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 172ff. Ibn Barrajān's notion of the Universal Servant may have been derived from the Brethren of Purity. See S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 68.

2 Y. Ibn 'Adī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, ed. S. al-Yasū'ī (Silsilat Rawā'i' al-turāth al-'arabī al-masīḥī, n.d.), 128–138; Y. Ibn 'Adī, *The Reformation of Morals*, ed. and tr. S. Griffith (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), xxxviii–xli, 92–99.

3 M. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, in two volumes (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), tr. S. Pines, 1:49 [I 21].

4 Thus according to Yaḥyá, the complete humans are those with perfect morals (*akhlāq*), meaning that, in true Aristotelian fashion, they cultivate moderation (*al-i'tidāl*) and avoid extremes (*al-ifrāṭ*). The way to achieve such perfection is "theoretical contemplation of the true [namely, Aristotelian] sciences and sitting with people of knowledge (*al-naẓar fī al-'ulūm al-ḥaqīqiyyah wa-mujālasat ahl al-'ilm*)". Ibn 'Adī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, 128–130; Ibn 'Adī, *Reformation of Morals*, 94–95. As for Maimonides, his conception of human perfection has been the subject of much scholarly disagreement. Menachem Kellner has, I think, quite convincingly argued that Maimonides thought that intellectual perfection must be followed (at least for Jews) by "halakhic perfection", that is, the imitation of God's actions through the perfect fulfilment of His commandments (*mitsvōt*). See M. Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990). The views of both Ibn 'Adī and Maimonides are rooted in the thought of al-Fārābī (d. 950/951), who "would consider neither the pure philosopher like Plotinus nor the man of action alone as perfect specimens of the human race but only the man who is both". R. Walzer, "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, no. 1 (1957), 142–148, 147.

5 G. Böwering, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online edition), s.v. "ENSĀN-E KĀMEL"; J. Nūrbakhsh, *Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh (iṣṭilāḥāt-i taṣawwuf)*, in eight volumes (Tehran: Chāpkhāneh-yi Marvī, 1371 SH [=1992/1993]), 6:76, 138. (I am grateful to Ufuk Öztürk for lending me his copy of this work.)

6 For a comprehensive treatment of this chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 17–24.

7 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 48–49.

8 This image recalls David's request in Psalm 17:8: "Keep me as the apple (*ke-īshōn*) of Your eye." See also Deut. 32:10, Prov. 7:2. The Hebrew word *īshōn* means 'pupil' and is the diminutive of *īsh*, the Hebrew word for 'man', thus denoting 'the

little man of the eye'. See L. Köhler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, and J.J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, in five volumes (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 1:44.

9 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 50.

10 See ibid..

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 199. See also Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 66.

13 This hadith and its variants appear in M. Bukhārī, *Le recueil des traditions mahométanes*, in four volumes, ed. L. Krehl (Leiden: Brill, 1862), 4:165–166; A.H. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 18 volumes in 9, ed. M. 'Abd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1995), 17:147 (no. 2841). For the different variants of the hadith and their chains of transmission, as well as a discussion of early theological debates concerning the report, see C. Melchert, "God Created Adam in His Image", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011), 113–124. For short discussions of its interpretation in Islamic theology, see M.J. Kister, "Ādam: A Study of Some Legends in *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīṯ* Literature", *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), 113–174, 137–138; Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 15–17. For Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters' use of this hadith, see e.g. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 199, 216; Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, in four volumes (Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-'arabiyyah al-kubrá, 1329 AH [=1911]), 1:680, 2:4, 2:391; al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ 'alá Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Egypt: al-Maṭba'ah al-Yamaniyyah, n.d.), 11.

14 This was recognised by certain Muslim commentators. See Kister, "Ādam", 138; J. van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra*, in four volumes, tr. G. Goldbloom (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2017), 4:421.

15 For the different ways in which the *homo imago dei* motif has been interpreted in Jewish and Christian theology, see A. Altmann, "*Homo Imago Dei* in Jewish and Christian Theology", *Journal of Religion* 48, no. 3 (1968), 235–259.

16 For these, see ibid., 240–246.

17 The *homo imago dei* motif was also controversial in Jewish thought. See e.g. Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:21 [1:1], where he warns against interpreting Gen. 1:26 as an indication of the corporeality of God – a warning that is one of the main themes of the *Guide*.

18 See al-Hallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, ed. and tr. L. Massignon (Paris: Librarie Paul Geuthner, 1913), 129, note 2; Kister, "Ādam", 138; van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 4:427–428. For an example of such an interpretation, see A. Bayḍāwī and M. Iṣfahānī (comm.), *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, in two volumes, ed. and tr. E.E. Calverley and J.W. Pollock (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2002), 2:756, note 28. Attempts to explain away the apparent anthropomorphic content of the hadith are also found in early Imami Shi'i literature. See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 119, note 45.

19 See Nicholson, *Studies*, 80; al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, ed. A. 'Afīfī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah li-al-ṭibā'ah wa-al-nashr, 1964), 71. Al-Ghazālī prefers the reading that God created Adam "according to the form of the All-Merciful (*'alá ṣūrat al-raḥmān*)".

20 See Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 67, quoting the *Futūḥāt*: "All the Divine Names are bound to him [man = Adam] without one single exception. Thus, Adam came out in the image of the Name *Allāh*, because this name comprises all the Divine Names." See also W. Chittick, "The Chapter Headings of the *Fusûs*", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 2 (1984), 41–94, 49.

21 For earlier treatments of Ibn 'Arabī's idea of the microcosm, see Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 82; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 218–246; Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*,

100–108; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 16–17; N.H. Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl: dirāsah fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān 'ind Muḥyī al-dīn Ibn 'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 1983), 157–175; Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā*, 231–234; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 170–171, 198–200.

22 R. Allers, "MICROCOSMUS: From Anaximandros to Paracelsus", *Traditio* 2 (1944), 319–407, 321. Allers' article, the classic study of the history of the idea of the microcosm, identifies and discusses six different formulations of the idea in Western philosophical literature.

23 See M. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizârî Ismâîlîs against the Islamic World* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1955), 10; ʿAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 188; Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 66–74; Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 74–92; Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 3–5, 33; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 169, 189–198; E. Krinis, "The Philosophical and Theosophical Interpretations of the Microcosm-Macrocosm Analogy in *Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* and Jewish Medieval Writings", *L'Ésoterisme Shi'ite: ses racines et ses prolongements*, ed. M. Amir-Moezzi, M. De Cillis, D. De Smet and O. Mir-Kasimov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 395–409.

24 See Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 92; al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb-i Kīmīyā-yi sa'ādat*, ed. A. Ārām (Tehran: Chapkhānah-yi Markazī, 1954), 34–35; al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 71.

25 Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 71.

26 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 49.

27 Ibid., 49.

28 Ibid., 50.

29 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:216. See also Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 101.

30 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 49.

31 Ibid., 48. See also Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 208; Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 18, 21.

32 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 55.

33 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:464; Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 110.

34 Ibn 'Arabī had himself already made this point, drawing an analogy with the letters. See Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:396: "The human being encompasses all of the levels through his level, just as the letter *wāw* encompasses all of the other letters."

35 Al-Qūnawī, *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jam' wa-al-wujūd*, ed. A. al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2010), 82.

36 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah-ʿi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam-i Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿArabī*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Kitābfurūshī-yi bāstān, 1350 SH [=1966]), 273.

37 See al-Qūnawī, *I'jāz al-bayān fī tafsīr umm al-Qur'ān*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī (Qom: Mu'assasah-yi Būstān-i Kitāb-i Qom, 1380 SH/1423 AH [=2002]), 10: "and [the Real] made the Perfect Human – who is the microcosm with respect to his form – a mediating book (*kitāban wasaṭan*) that synthesises the plane of the names and the plane of the named".

38 Ibn 'Arabī, for instance, uses the term "little Qur'an" (*Qur'ān ṣaghīr*) to denote the Perfect Human, and in one instance even identifies himself with the Qur'an and the 'seven oft-repeated verses' (*al-sab' al-mathānī*), i.e. the *Fātiḥah*. See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 908; Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā*, 48–49.

39 See e.g. al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 266; al-Qāshānī, *Mu'jam*, 11: "Man is a summary (*mukhtaṣar*) of the divine presence."

40 S. Bashier, *Ibn al-'Arabī's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 7. See also Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 117–118; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 191–196.

41 Quoted in Jāmī, *Sharḥ al-Jāmī 'alá Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2004), 57; Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 281. See also Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 95–98; al-Qūnawī, *I'jāz*, 113; Chittick, "Chapter Headings", 49–50.

42 Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 36. See also ibid., 84–86, 95–96, 99.

43 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 11. See also ibid., 268:

> He [Muhammad] is this "most-perfect" through [his] synthesising (*jāmi'*) of unqualified oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah*), evenness (*shaf'iyyah*), and oddness (*al-watriyyah*), i.e. the qualified oneness (*al-wāḥidiyyah*) that is the essence, the attribute, and the name. In their technical terminology it is called the greatest reality of realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq al-kubrá*) and the synthetic isthmus (*al-barzakh al-jāmi'*) and the real Adam and the one source.

44 For this term, see al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 276; al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1474; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 70.

45 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah*, 475.

46 See e.g. al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, in four volumes (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1984), 2:181–182.

47 Al-Jīlī, *Marātib*, 53–54.

48 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 212.

49 See also ibid., 228–252, where, in the chapter on the seven heavens, al-Jīlī maps out the correspondences between the seven heavens, the seven planets, the seven names of the divine self, the seven greatest angels, the seven greatest prophets, and the seven faculties in man.

50 See e.g. Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 89, 93, 99; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 189–198.

51 See Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 198–199.

52 See Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 89–90.

53 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 212.

54 For a full list of the names of the essence, see ibid., 96.

55 Ibid., 213.

56 Ibid.

57 The concept of the *walīy*, pl. *awliyā'* – a term sometimes translated as 'saint', goes back to the Qur'an: "The friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*) have no fear, nor are they sorrowful" (Q 10:292). The manuals of classical Sufism contain discussions on the meaning of the term. Thus al-Qushayrī, for instance, explains that the term

> has two meanings: one of them has a passive sense, he [namely, the *walīy*] being the one who is entrusted (*yatawallá*) with God's command … The other has strongly active sense, he being the one who undertakes (*yatawallá*) the worship of God and obedience to Him (*'ibādat Allāh wa-ṭā'atahu*), such that his worship is continuous, without any disobedience intervening. And both of these two descriptions are necessary for the Friend of God to be a Friend of God.

Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, ed. K. al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2001), 292. For other definitions of the *walīy* in classical Sufi literature, see Nūrbakhsh, *Farhang*, 6:66–68. The concept is extremely prevalent in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, who as we shall see elevates the Friend of God to the status of 'general prophet'.

58 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 77–78.

59 Ibid., 116–117. See also a very similar passage in *al-Kamālāt*, 231.

60 Compare his statement to the definition of Sufism attributed to the Baghdadi Sufi of the classical period Abū Bakr al-Shiblī: "It is the annihilation of the humanity (*fanā'-i nāsūtī*) and the appearance of divinity (*ẓuhūr-i lāhūtī*)." Quoted in F. 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, ed. M. Isti'lāmī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawār, 1392 SH [=2013]), 551. Note as well the statement of the Baghdadi Sufi, and friend of al-Ḥallāj, Ibn 'Aṭā' (d. 921/922) to the effect that remembrance of God (*dhikr*) will lead to the "effacement of humanness" (*izāl al-bashariyyah*), cited in al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, 219. In this regard, al-Jīlī's position seems to correspond more to the ideas found among the so-called 'intoxicated' Sufis of the classical period than to the Sufi metaphysics of the Ibn 'Arabian tradition. The prevalence of such ideas is indicated by the fact that al-Sarrāj devotes a short chapter of his manual to 'Mentioning those who have erred with regard to the passing away of humanness' (*fanā' al-bashariyyah*). See ibid., 427. According to Christopher Melchert, it seems as if al-Sarrāj "believes in the experience [of the passing away of humanness, or 'human nature'] but wants mystics not to describe it in language obnoxious to the ascetical-minded orthodox, jealous of divine transcendence". C. Melchert, "Origins and Early Sufism", *Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. L. Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–23, 21.

61 Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yi sa'ādat*, 25: "This [perfect primordial nature (*fiṭrah*)] is not specific to the Prophet, since the Prophet is also a human being (*ādamī*): 'Say: "I am a human like you" (Q 41:6).'" And see also, in a modern context, the statement of the current Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa:

> It is … impermissible to negate the Messenger of God's humanity [s], because this would conflict with the Qur'an's words, *Say: I am but a human being like you who receives revelation* [41:6]. The safe approach is to affirm all that God has affirmed concerning the Messenger of God [s], such as him being light as well as being human, without going into details and debate.

A. Gomaa, *Responding From the Tradition: One Hundred Contemporary Fatwas by the Grand Mufti of Egypt*, tr. N. Friedlander and T. Elgawhary (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011), 145.

62 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah*, 475.

63 Ibid.

64 See e.g. al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 275: "[Muhammad] synthesised Real-ness (*al-ḥaqqiyyah*) and createdness (*al-khalqiyyah*), and necessity (*al-wujūb*) and contingency (*al-imkān*), but the category of createdness and contingency was what dominated over him (*al-ghālib 'alayhi*)."

65 For this philosophical conception, see F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958). For Ibn Khaldūn's adherence to something close to this view, see Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldûn's*, 88–91, esp. 88, note 3: "There is probably no more decisive indication of Ibn Khaldûn's *philosophic* interpretation of the phenomena of prophecy than his identification of the 'angels' with the 'pure intellects'."

66 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 1:413.

67 Ibid., 1:415. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:199.

68 Al-Hallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, 14. Cf. Ibn 'Arabī's aforementioned phrase *huwa lā huwa*.

69 M. Iqbal, "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as Expounded by Abdul Karim Jilani", *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, in two volumes, ed. Ahmad Shirwani (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2015), 1:95.

70 See I. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, tr. A. and R. Hamori, with introduction and notes by B. Lewis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 113.

71 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 126.
72 See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 876–878, 909–911; al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1327–1330; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 89–98.
73 See al- Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210.
74 For Ibn 'Arabī's association of *taṣarruf* with *karāmah*, see al-Ḥākim, *al-Mu'jam*, 694. It should be noted that in Islamic literature, the term *karāmāt* is normally used for the miracles of the *awliyā'*, in contrast to *mu'jizāt*, the miracles of the prophets. See L. Gardet, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Karāma"; Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Ṣúfiism*, tr. R.A. Nicholson. Leiden: Brill, 1911), 218–235; al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yi sa'ādat*, 25; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 1:408–409.
75 See al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*, 152–153.
76 I have not been able to find the statement that al-Jīlī here attributes to al-Shiblī in any of the Sufi hagiographies or collections of ecstatic utterances (*shataḥāt*), such as Farīd al-dīn 'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* or the *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyyāt* of Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209). Nevertheless, the statement is in keeping with the general tenor of the Sufi tradition's view of al-Shiblī as an ecstatic mystic prone to openly revealing the mystery of the manifestation of God in man (and in this case, in himself). For al-Shiblī, see F. Sobieroj, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "al-S_h_iblī", and the passage from 'Aṭṭār quoted below.
77 This is a reference to chapter eight of the *Futūḥāt*, "On the knowledge of the Earth which was created from what remained of the leaven of Adam's clay, and which is the Earth of True Reality, mentioning the strange things and marvels it contains". See H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shī'ite Iran*, tr. N Pearson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 135–143.
78 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 72.
79 See van Ess, *Theology and Society*, 4:408.
80 Note, therefore, its similarity to the prayer of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: "Not an atom moves but by His permission." Quoted in C. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 249.
81 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 215.
82 For the hadith, see Bukhārī, *Le recueil*, 4:231. For Ibn 'Arabī's use of this *ḥadīth qudsī*, see W.A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, With Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadîth qudsî* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 173–174; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 176, 325–330; Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 110. For use of this hadith in Sufism more generally, see Graham, *Divine Word*, 173; A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 43; al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 61–62.
83 See also al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 269, 278, where he makes an explicit connection between this *ḥadīth qudsī*, the seven attributes of the divine self, and the Perfect Human's miraculous powers.
84 Ibid., 152.
85 See ibid., 120, where al-Jīlī mentions Jesus' performance of these miracles.
86 For the Gospel accounts, see Mark 6:45–53, Matthew 14:22–34, John 6:15–21. For the appearance of this story in medieval Islamic literature, see T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 111.
87 Compare Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 143, where he notes that other humans than Jesus, such as the famous Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, possessed the capacity to revive the dead by breathing the divine spirit into them.

88 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 196–197. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 1:409.
89 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 195.
90 Although the Qur'an contains several scattered references to the Fall of Adam and Eve, it is often said that there is no doctrine of original sin in Islam. See A.H. Johns, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Fall of Man". Nevertheless, al-Jīlī does appear to be describing something very like a doctrine of original sin here. There was some precedent for this in the writings of the Andalusian Sufis Ibn Barrajān and Ibn Qasī (d. 1151). See Casewit, *Mystics of al-Andalus*, 253–254; M. Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?" *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015), 196–232, 215–217.
91 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 200.
92 Ibid., 195.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 200.
95 It should be noted that in chapter 63 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* al-Jīlī identifies as the 'philosophers' (*al-falāsifah*) as the group (*ṭā'ifah*) that worships the planets. See ibid., 207.
96 Ibid., 200–201.
97 Ibid., 201.
98 Ibid., 201–202.
99 Ibid., 202.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 202–203.
102 Ibid., 203.
103 Ibid., 205.
104 On this point see al-'Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 158; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 273; Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 11–13; Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 29–30.
105 Thus Shahab Ahmed, for instance, cites the famous Persian Sufi poetic phrase "All is He" (*hameh ūst*) in his description of Ibn 'Arabī's Sufi metaphysical worldview. See Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 28. See also the examples cited above from Nicholson, 'Afīfī, Rosenthal, and Knysh.
106 See e.g. al-'Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 158.
107 See e.g. B. Radtke and J. O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1996), 45ff., 255 s.v. *nafs*; Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 196–207; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 123; al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul & On Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*)*, tr. T. Winter (Cambridge; Islamic Texts Society, 2016).
108 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:157–158.
109 Ibid., 3:143.
110 See W. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 270.
111 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:568.
112 Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 123.
113 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 196. See also ibid., 192.
114 See N. Taleb, *Antifragile: How to Live in a World We Don't Understand* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). Taleb defines the antifragile as that which is neither fragile nor robust, but rather "gains from disorder".
115 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 205.
116 Ibid., 151–152.

117 See e.g. Q 3:14, 7:81, 27:55, 52:22, 56:21, 77:42. Ibn 'Arabī, it should be noted, connects the term *bashar* with man's "animality" (*ḥayawāniyyah*), a term that likewise connotes sinful behaviour. See Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 183.

118 See W. Madelung, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "'Iṣmah"; Goldziher, *Introduction*, 186–187; S. Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1991), 142–147. It should also be noted that, according to the classical Sufi conception of *walāyah*, the Friends of God were believed to be "preserved" (*maḥẓūr*) from sin, a lower category of infallibility than *'iṣmah*, yet a form of infallibility all the same. See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 292.

119 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:183. See also Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 75.

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4 The Pole

Ibn ʻArabian antecedents

The concept of the spiritual Pole (*al-quṭb*) appears already in the formative period of Sufism, as well as in classical Sufi texts such as Hujwīrī's (d. 1072) *Kashf al-maḥjūb* and the poetry and 'symbolic discourses' (*maqālāt ramziyyah*) attributed to ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[1] While the related concept of the *axis mundi* is found in other religious traditions, the origins of the Sufi conception of the *quṭb* may lie in pre-Islamic Arabian conceptions mediated through early Islamic poetry about the caliph.[2] Ibn ʻArabī adopted the term *quṭb* as one of the names of the Perfect Human – though it seems that he does not make so explicit a link between the Pole and the Perfect Human as al-Jīlī does. He also uses titles such as 'The Saviour' (*al-ghawth*), 'The Pole of Existence' (*quṭb al-wujūd*), 'The Pole of the Time' (*quṭb al-zamān/al-waqt*), and 'The One of the Time' (*al-wāḥid al-zamān*), to the same effect.[3] Most basically, for Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters, the Pole denotes the individual at the head of the hierarchy of 'Unique Ones' (*al-afrād*) or 'Pegs' (*al-awtād*) – that is, the 'Ones Brought Near [to God]' (*al-muqarrabūn*), who are the elite of the Friends of God (*al-awliyāʼ*).[4] This is a hierarchy around which the entirety of existence revolves, and upon which existence depends for its preservation.[5]

The association between the Pole and the Perfect Human in Ibn ʻArabī's thought emerges from the following passage of the *Futūḥāt*:

> The Pole, who is the servant of God (*ʻabd Allāh*) and the servant of the Synthesiser (*ʻabd al-jāmiʻ*), is qualified by all the names, in his [initial] creation and in his attainment of realisation (*takhalluqan wa-taḥaqquqan*). He is the mirror of the Real (*mirʼāt al-ḥaqq*), the locus of manifestation of the holy qualities (*majlá al-nuʻūt al-muqaddasah*), the locus of manifestation of the divine loci of manifestation (*majlá al-maẓāhir al-ilāhiyyah*), and the Lord of the Time (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*).[6]

Ibn ʻArabī gives a similar definition of the Pole in a short treatise titled "The Book on the Rank, Station, and State of the Pole" (*Kitāb Manzil al-quṭb wa-maqāmihi wa-ḥālihi*), which is found in his collected epistles (*Rasāʼil*):

> The Pole is the centre of the circle (*markaz al-dā'irah*) and encompasses it (*muḥīṭuhā*), and he is the mirror of the Real (*mir'āt al-ḥaqq*). The world revolves around him. He has subtle realities (*raqā'iq*) that extend to the hearts of all created beings (*mumtaddah ilá jamī' qulūb al-khalā'iq*).[7]

The last sentence of this definition, in pointing to the microcosmic nature of the Pole, further reinforces our sense of the connection between the Pole and the Perfect Human, even if their identification is not made explicit (as it is in al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil*, as we shall see).[8]

A key function of the Pole in Ibn 'Arabī's thought is to serve as the place from which God can look upon His creation, a function indicated by the image of "the mirror of the Real" in the two definitions just quoted. This picks up a passage from the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* where, playing on the double meaning of the word *insān* (which, as we have seen, can mean both "man" and "pupil of the eye"), Ibn 'Arabī says that man was so called because "through him, the Real gazes upon His creation (*yanẓur al-ḥaqq ilá khalqihi*), and has mercy upon them".[9] That last clause indicates that we are here dealing with the function of the Perfect Human as a *logos* type figure who features in the creation of the world (on which see Chapter 5 below), "having mercy", in the Ibn 'Arabī's usage, denoting God's act of granting existence to creation.[10] In the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn 'Arabī explicitly associates this function with the Perfect Human *qua* Pole: "One of them [namely, the Pegs (*al-awtād*)] is the Pole, who is the place of the Real's gaze within the world (*mawḍi' naẓar al-ḥaqq min al-'ālam*)."[11] This definition of the Pole was adopted by Ibn 'Arabī's interpreters. Thus al-Qāshānī in his dictionary of Sufi metaphysical technical terms defines the Pole as "the one (*al-wāḥid*) who is the place of God's gaze – May He be exalted – within the world (*mawḍi' naẓar Allāh ta'ālá min al-'ālam*) in every age, and his heart is like the heart of Isrāfīl".[12]

Another function of the Pole – and the other members of the cosmic hierarchy – in Ibn 'Arabian thought is their role in the preservation of the universe: "They [namely, the messengers] are the Poles, the Imams, and the Pegs (*al-awtād*), through whom God preserves (*yaḥfaẓ*) the world, just as a house is preserved by its pillars (*arkān*)."[13] Again, this recalls the description of Adam in the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*: "He is called a viceregent (*khalīfah*) … because He – May He be exalted – preserves (*ḥāfiẓ*) His creation through him, just as a seal preserves a treasure chest."[14] This function was taken up by Ibn 'Arabī's followers in their description of the Pole. Thus the Persian poet and Ibn 'Arabian Sufi Shīrīn Maghribī (d. 1408) writes: "Let us not shake the Pole from his place / lest our wheel (*charkh*) [of existence] become unstable (*bī-thabāt*)."[15] It seems clear from these explanations of the Pole's function that the Pole is one of the names of the Perfect Human, even if Ibn 'Arabī and his leading interpreters do not explicitly make this identification, and that the Pole serves in this regard to connect the divine and

created realms and to preserve the relationship between them and the continued existence of creation.

Another of the key questions pertaining to the Ibn ʻArabian treatment of the Pole concerns the *number* of Poles in existence. Prior to Ibn ʻArabī, Hujwīrī had stated in *Kashf al-maḥjūb* that of "those who are the People of Loosing and Binding (*ahl-i ḥall va ʻaqd*) and the Commanders of the Court of the Real (*sarhangān-i dargāh-i ḥaqq*) … there is one who is called the Pole and the Saviour".[16] Ibn ʻArabī likewise explains in the *Futūḥāt* that "of those who can be called Poles in the technical sense of the term, in an unqualified way (*muṭlaqan*) and without addition (*iḍāfah*), there is only one in every age, and who is also the Saviour (*al-ghawth*)".[17] He repeats this idea even more explicitly later on in the same work:

> In any age there is only one (*wāḥid*) who is called "The Saviour" (*al-gawth*) and "The Pole" (*al-quṭb*), who is singled out by the Real and is secluded from [the rest of] His creation. So if his enlightened body (*haykaluhu al-munawwar*) departs [this world], [The Real] singles out another individual. He does not single out two individuals in a single age.[18]

Again, this idea was picked up by his interpreters; note, for instance, how al-Qāshānī in his dictionary definition of the *quṭb* quoted above states that the Pole is "*one* (*wāḥid*) … in every age".[19]

Yet despite this apparent insistence in the Ibn ʻArabian tradition on the uniqueness of the Pole at any one time, Ibn ʻArabī does also allow for the term to be used of multiple contemporaneous individuals in a less technical and restricted sense:

> The Poles are those who synthesise (*al-jāmiʻūn*) the spiritual states (*al-aḥwāl*) and stations (*al-maqāmāt*) by virtue of both their original nature and by virtue of deputeeship (*bi-al-aṣālah wa-bi-al-niyābah*). But this application may be extended, for anyone around whom a certain one of the stations revolves (*dāra ʻalayhi*), and who is singled out for it [namely, that station] in his time, over his fellow men, may be called a "pole". And one can call the man of a certain country (*rajul balad*) the "pole" of that country, and the *shaykh* of a gathering (*shaykh jamāʻah*) the "pole" of that gathering.[20]

For Ibn ʻArabī, therefore, in any one age there is one true cosmic Pole, but multiple possible lesser or local 'poles' in the less technical metaphysical sense.

Furthermore, in chapter 14 of the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ʻArabī also introduces a higher category of Poles whom he calls "Perfected Poles" (*aqṭāb mukammalīn*). Recounting a "most sacred vision" (*mashhad aqdas*) that he experienced in Cordoba, he enumerates 25 such figures, explaining that they lived between Adam and Muhammad and giving each of them a mysterious name that represents

some form of activity (e.g. 'The Differentiator' [*al-mufarriq*], 'The Healer of Wounds' [*mudāwī al-kulūm*], "Weeping" [*al-bakā'*]).[21] Complicating matters still further, he goes on to state in clear terms that there has nevertheless only ever been, and will always be, *one* true Pole:

> As for the one and only Pole (*al-quṭb al-wāḥid*), it is the spirit of Muhammad (*rūḥ Muhammad*) – May God bless him and grant him peace – which is extended to all of the messengers and prophets – Peace be upon them all – and the Poles, from the time of the [beginning] of the human race until the Day of Resurrection.[22]

It seems that we can only reconcile these variant figures for the number of Poles if we think, as Ibn 'Arabī seems to have done, in terms of a hierarchy of Poles, whereby there is one eternal Pole (the spirit of Muhammad, which Ibn 'Arabī sometimes calls "The Pole of Poles" [*quṭb al-aqṭāb*][23]), 27 representatives or manifestations of this eternal Pole (the 25 'perfected Poles', plus Adam and Muhammad, together making up the 27 prophets to whom Ibn 'Arabī devotes a chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*), one of whom is always the Pole of the age, and innumerable lesser representatives of those 27, who can be called 'poles' in a less cosmic sense.

A final, related issue to consider in connection to the Ibn 'Arabian conception of the Pole is the *identity* of the *quṭb*. In a passage from the *Futūḥāt* quoted partially above, Ibn 'Arabī appears to identify the Poles with the divine messengers (*al-rusul*), which is to say (according to the traditional Islamic view), those prophets who were given a scripture:

> The highest of the elite (*a'lá al-khawāṣṣ*) among [God's] servants are the messengers (*al-rusul*) – Peace be upon them – who possess the station of messengership (*al-risālah*), prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*), divine friendship (*al-walāyah*), and faith (*al-īmān*). So they are the pillars of the house of humankind (*arkān bayt al-naw' al-insānī*) … and they are the Poles (*al-aqṭāb*), the Imams and the Pegs (*al-awtād*) through whom God preserves the world, just as a house is preserved by its pillars…So humankind is never devoid of one of the messengers of God (*rasūl min rusul Allāh*) … and that messenger is the aforementioned Pole, upon whom the Real gazes.[24]

Such an identification of the Poles with the messengers would fit with the figure of 27 'perfected Poles' just cited, 27 (as just noted) being the number of prophets treated by Ibn 'Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ*.

Furthermore, according to Ibn 'Arabī, the true Pole of the present age is one messenger in particular: the Prophet Idrīs (who is often identified with the Biblical patriarch Enoch).[25] According to Ibn 'Arabī, Idrīs – along with Jesus, Elijah, and Khiḍr, the other 'Pegs' (*awtād*) of the lower world[26] – is alive in this world (though it should be noted that Ibn 'Arabī believes that "the seven heavens are

part of this world").[27] While others, such as the 'Friends of God', may take on the characteristics of the Pole, therefore, they in fact only do so in their capacity as "deputies" (*nuwwāb*) of the true Pole, Idrīs, who remains hidden from view.[28] This, Ibn 'Arabī tells us, is the status of 'poles' from the post-Muhammadan era like the Rāshidūn caliphs and the Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī.[29] In this regard, these Friends of God are probably to be identified only with the lesser 'poles' referred to above.

Ibn 'Arabī's identification of Idrīs as the true Pole, alive yet hidden from human sight, seems to pick up a motif from Jewish Biblical exegesis: based on Genesis 5:24 – "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" – Idrīs' Biblical equivalent Enoch was widely believed not to have died but to have been taken up directly – and *alive* – to paradise.[30] This motif was incorporated into the Qur'an (19:57) – which describes how God "raised him [namely, Enoch] to a lofty place" – and into Islamic 'tales of the prophets' (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) and historical literature,[31] and so would have been well known to Ibn 'Arabī. Ibn 'Arabī in fact begins the chapter on Idrīs in the *Fuṣūṣ* with a quasi-exegesis of Q 19:57, in which he discusses the nature of "loftiness" (*'uluww*). Ibn 'Arabī there indicates that Idrīs' status as Pole is linked to the traditional idea that Idrīs dwells in the orbit of the sun (*falak al-shams*), the orbit that is "the millstone of the world of orbits" (*raḥā al-aflāk*) (the millstone, in traditional Arabian cosmic imagery, functioning in a similar way to the pole),[32] insofar as there are seven orbits above it and seven below it.[33] "From the perspective that he [namely, Idrīs] is the Pole of the orbits (*quṭb al-aflāk*)", Ibn 'Arabī concludes, "he is of lofty rank".[34] Indeed, such is Idrīs' status in Ibn 'Arabī's eyes that he is the only figure to whom Ibn 'Arabī devotes two chapters in the *Fuṣūṣ*: the second, on Elijah (in Arabic Ilyās, another of Idrīs' Biblical alter egos),[35] explains that, after being raised up to the orbit of the sun by God, Idrīs/Elijah was subsequently sent back down to earth to the town of Baalbek. In this new state, Idrīs experienced a vision in which a horse of fire came out of the mountain of Lebanon. On mounting the horse, Idrīs' sensual desires (*shahwah*) fell away, and he became a pure "intellect without desire" (*'aqlan bi-lā shahwah*).[36] The implication is perhaps that, in thus passing beyond human attachments and desires and attaining intellectual perfection, Idrīs attained a status worthy of the Perfect Human or Pole. Finally, Ibn 'Arabī's identification of Idrīs as the Pole may also have something to do with the widespread tendency in medieval Islamic culture to connect Idrīs with the occult, and in particular with the legendary figure of Hermes Trismegistus. If, as suggested in Chapter 3 of this book, the Pole or Perfect Human was believed to possess miraculous, quasi-magical powers, then it would be natural to identify Idrīs, the prophet of the occult par excellence, as the Pole.[37] All of these dimensions of Idrīs' traditional persona – the Biblical/Qur'anic idea of Enoch/Idrīs being taken alive into heaven, his association with the sun, and his identification with the prophet Elijah and with Hermes Trismegistus – may in fact have been at work in Ibn 'Arabī's mind, for taken together they justify viewing Idrīs as a particularly special and elevated figure.

If Ibn ʻArabī's identification of Idrīs as the true Pole of the age reflects the influence on his thought of what has been called the "common religious culture" of the three monotheistic religions in the medieval Islamic world,[38] as well as the influence of pre-Islamic Arabian imagery and popular legends connected to the occult, this should not obscure the fact that he also puts forward a more narrowly 'Islamic' conception of the identity of the Pole. As we saw just above, in chapter 14 of the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ʻArabī indicates that there has and will be one true Pole from the beginning to the end of time, and that this figure is not Idrīs, but the "spirit" of the Prophet Muhammad.[39] This appears to be a reference to the concept of the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muhammadiyyah*), which we shall consider below. Indeed, al-Qayṣarī makes an explicit connection between the Pole and the Muhammadan Reality:

> The Pole, which is that around which the governing effects of the world revolve and which is the centre of the circle of existence, from pre-eternity until forever (*min al-azal ilá al-abad*), is one (*wāḥid*) with respect to the governing effect of unity, which is [the unity of] the Muhammadan Reality, and from the perspective of the governing effect of multiplicity it [namely, the Pole] is many (*mutʻaddid*).[40]

Al-Qayṣarī goes on to explain that, "before the cutting off of prophethood" with the death of Muhammad, both "an outward prophet" (*nabīy ẓāhir*) like Abraham or a "hidden Friend of God" (*walīy khafīy*) like Khiḍr were able to attain the "level of the Pole" (*al-martabah al-quṭbiyyah*), whereas now that level is the preserve of the Friends of God alone.[41] It therefore appears that Ibn ʻArabī's more idiosyncratic speculations about the identity of the Pole in the *Futūḥāt* – especially his identification of Idrīs as the true Pole of the present age – were not taken up in the later commentary tradition, where the tendency appears to have been to identify the one true Pole – or what al-Qayṣarī calls "the Pole of Poles"[42] – with Muhammad – as in chapter 14 of the *Futūḥāt* – and the Poles of the present age with the *awliyā'* who follow him.

Despite the efforts of the thinkers in the Qūnawī tradition to render Ibn ʻArabī's conception of the Pole more acceptable to orthodox Islamic opinion, therefore, the idea still came under considerable criticism. In particular, anti-Ibn ʻArabian Sunni scholars tended to draw attention to its similarity to the Shiʻi conception of the Imam. Thus the famous North African Mālikī *faqīh* and philosopher of history Ibn Khaldūn writes in the *Muqaddimah*:

> Then those later Sufis (*al-muta'akhkhirīn min al-mutaṣawwifah*) who spoke about unveiling (*al-kashf*) and that which is beyond the senses went much further into that, and many of them went so far as to profess [divine] indwelling [in creation] (*al-ḥulūl*) and the unity [of existence] (*al-waḥdah*), as we have alluded to. They filled many pages with this: for example, al-Harawī in his *Kitāb al-Maqāmat*, and others. And they were followed by Ibn al-ʻArabī and Ibn Sabʻīn and their student Ibn al-ʻAfīf and Ibn al-Fāriḍ

> and al-Najm al-Isrā'īlī in their poems. Their predecessors had mixed with (*mukhāliṭīn*) the later Ismailis [namely, the Nizaris] from among the Shi'ah (*al-rāfiḍah*), who also professed divine indwelling and the divinity of the Imams (*ilāhiyyat al-a'immah*), a doctrine that was not known to their predecessors. So each of the two groups drank from the doctrine of the other, and their speech got mixed up and their beliefs became alike, and there appeared in the speech of the Sufis statements about the Pole (*al-quṭb*), by which they meant the head of the gnostics (*ra's al-'ārifīn*), about whom they claimed that no one can equal him with respect to the station of his knowledge, until God makes him die, and then makes another of the gnostics (*ahl al-'irfān*) the heir to his station … This idea has no basis in rational proof (*ḥujjah 'aqliyyah*) nor in legal argument (*dalīl shar'ī*), rather it is a kind of speech that is identical to what the Shi'ah say.[43]

Ibn Khaldūn's view has been echoed (albeit without the polemical tone or intent) by a number of modern scholars.[44] The Shi'i associations of the Ibn 'Arabian idea of the *quṭb*, however, probably do not reflect conscious or direct borrowing, so much as shared sources (particularly the pre-Islamic notion of the *quṭb* alluded to at the beginning of this chapter),[45] and perhaps what Marshall Hodgson called "the moulding of Islam as a whole in a Shi'itic direction" during the Middle Periods.[46] This latter point, as we shall see, is of relevance to al-Jīlī and his development of the idea of the Perfect Human more broadly.

Al-Jīlī's position

Al-Jīlī's most extensive discussion of the Pole comes in chapter 60 (the chapter devoted to the Perfect Human), which is an indication that he saw *al-quṭb* and *al-insān al-kāmil* as essentially synonymous. Indeed, he makes this explicit at the beginning of the passage in which he treats the subject of the Pole: "Know – May God preserve you", he writes, "that the Perfect Human is the Pole around whom the orbits of existence revolve, from the beginning [of time] to its end (*al-quṭb al-ladhī tadūr 'alayhi aflāk al-wujūd min awwalihi ilá ākhirihi*)."[47] Everything that can be said of the Perfect Human can therefore be said of the Pole, and vice versa.

Next, al-Jīlī treats the issue of the number and identity of the Pole(s):

> And he [namely, the Pole] is one (*wāḥid*), from the beginning of existence until forever (*mundhu kāna al-wujūd ilá abad al-ābadīn*). Then he has a variety (*tanawwu'*) of garments (*malābis*) and appears in bodies (*kanā'is*), and so is named according to the garment (*libās*), and is not named according to another garment. His original name (*ismuhu al-aṣlī*) is Muhammad, his *kunyah* is Abū al-Qāsim, his description (*waṣf*) is "servant of God" (*'abd Allāh*), and his honorific (*laqab*) is "the sun of religion" (*shams al-dīn*). Then, from the perspective of [his appearance in] the other garments, he has other names, and in every age he has a name befitting of his garment in that age.[48]

Al-Jīlī's position here constitutes an adoption of and elaboration upon the position set out by al-Qayṣarī. Like the Pole described by the latter, al-Jīlī's Pole oscillates between unity and multiplicity. Thus, using language highly reminiscent of the passage from al-Qayṣarī's *Muqaddimah* quoted above, al-Jīlī identifies a single Pole whose existence began and will end with the existence of the world, while at the same time identifying a 'variety' of other Poles, who constitute loci of manifestation or 'garments' of this original one Pole. As we saw above, al-Qayṣarī seems to suggest that this original one Pole is Muhammad, or rather what he calls 'the Muhammadan Reality'. Al-Jīlī makes this identification much more explicit, leaving the reader in no doubt that it is Muhammad who is the true and eternal Pole. Moreover, al-Jīlī also indicates that this one true Pole was not only the Muhammadan Reality,[49] that is, the eternal metaphysical principle associated with Muhammad, but was also Muhammad the man, that is, the Prophet and Messenger of God who lived in a particular time and place. He does this by referring to the *kunyah*, *waṣf*, and *laqab* of Muhammad, which serve to call the reader's attention to Muhammad as a historical figure. In thus both making more explicit the identification of the Pole with Muhammad and in identifying the Pole with Muhammad the man as well as Muhammad the metaphysical principle, al-Jīlī takes the Ibn 'Arabian idea of the Pole to a new level. We will look at this idea again when we come to consider the identity of the Perfect Human, but suffice it to say here that al-Jīlī's explicit identification of the Pole or Perfect Human with Muhammad is one of his most important and distinctive ideas.

As for the different 'garments' in which the one true Pole appears – an image which might remind us of Paul's injunction in his *Letter to the Romans* to "clothe yourselves (*endusasthe*) with the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14; see also Gal. 3:27) – al-Jīlī does not explicitly reveal their identity here, save for mentioning an experience he had in which he witnessed Muhammad – as Pole – appear in the form of his Sufi shaykh, Ismā'īl al-Jabartī. While we will look at al-Jīlī's report of this incident later in this book, what is important in this context is that it indicates that the 'garments' in which the Pole appears include the post-Muhammadan 'Friends of God' (for al-Jīlī certainly viewed al-Jabartī as a Friend of God). Indeed, elsewhere in *al-Insān al-kāmil* al-Jīlī explicitly refers to al-Jabartī as "The Lord of the Friends of God, the Realisers" (*sayyid al-awliyā' al-muḥaqqiqīn*), "The Perfect Shaykh" (*al-shaykh al-kāmil*), and "The Pole of Reality" (*quṭb al-ḥaqīqah*), among many other titles, indicating that he did indeed view al-Jabartī as the Pole and Perfect Human of his age.[50]

If it is clear, then, that post-Muhammadan 'Friends of God' like al-Jabartī were capable of attaining the status of Poles in al-Jīlī's view, then the same is also true of the *pre*-Muhammadan *awliyā'*. This comes out clearly in a fascinating passage from chapter 58 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, 'On the Muhammadan Form' (*fī al-ṣūrah al-Muhammadiyyah*):

> I met with Plato (*Aflāṭūn*), whom the people of outward forms (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) consider an unbeliever (*kāfir*). I saw him, and he had filled the unseen world

> (*al-ʿālam al-ghaybī*) with light and splendour. I saw that he had a station that I had not seen for any of the Friends of God. So I said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "The Pole of the Age and the One of the Times (*quṭb al-zamān wa-wāḥid al-awān*)."[51]

Al-Jīlī, it should be noted, does not challenge Plato's claim to be the Pole, but rather affirms his unique rank among the 'Friends of God'; indeed, later on in *al-Insān al-kāmil* al-Jīlī informs us that Plato, having drunk from the "water of life", is still alive, residing on "a mountain called Darāwand" – surely a reference to Mt Damavand in Iran, "'the mountain' *par excellence*" in Persian mythology.[52] In this regard he was following Ibn 'Arabī, who compares Plato to "the people of unveiling and finding (*ahl al-kashf wa-al-wujūd*)".[53] Moreover, al-Jīlī openly acknowledges that, according to the orthodox Muslim view represented by "the people of outward forms" (i.e. the religious scholars), Plato was an unbeliever. It therefore seems to be possible, in al-Jīlī's view, for Muhammad, as the one eternal Pole, to appear even among non-Muslims, at least prior to the historical mission of Muhammad the man. This, it seems, had been Ibn 'Arabī's position too.[54]

Finally, it also appears that, like al-Qayṣarī, al-Jīlī viewed (some of) the pre-Muhammadan prophets and messengers as Poles of their age. We can draw this out from a brief comment he makes in chapter 37, which is devoted to the Psalms (*al-zabūr*). In the context of his discussion of Solomon's request to God that the divine Viceregency (*al-khilāfah*) be limited to him (an idea that al-Jīlī draws out of Q 38:35 – "[Solomon] said, 'Lord, forgive me, and grant me a form of kingship [*mulk*] that is worthy of none after me.'"), al-Jīlī informs us that, from one perspective at least, Solomon's request was not answered, because the Viceregency was "also valid for the Poles (*al-aqṭāb*) and Unique Ones (*al-afrād*) [who came] after him".[55] It seems to be implied here that Solomon was a Pole and a 'Unique One'. Furthermore, elsewhere al-Jīlī also appears to pick up on Ibn 'Arabī's identification of Idrīs as the Pole. In the penultimate chapter of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, on the seven heavens, al-Jīlī locates Idrīs in the fourth heaven. Like Ibn 'Arabī had done in the *Fuṣūṣ*, al-Jīlī identifies this heaven as the heaven of the sun, and describes the sun, significantly for our purposes, as "the pole of the orbits" (*quṭb al-aflāk*) and the "heart" (*qalb*) of the fourth heaven. Idrīs, in al-Jīlī's account, was granted the honour of residing in this heaven because he possessed "knowledge of the reality of the heart" (*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqat al-qalbiyyah*) and so "was distinguished from others with respect to the rank of lordship (*al-rutbah al-rabbiyyah*)".[56] The language used here certainly reflects a highly exalted view of Idrīs, and seems to hint at the idea that this prophet is the Pole – a point reinforced when we remember that, for Ibn 'Arabī, the Perfect Human is "the heart to the body of the universe".[57] Nevertheless, it is clear that, for al-Jīlī, Idrīs' high rank still pales in comparison to that of Muhammad, who, in al-Jīlī's scheme (as in traditional accounts of the Prophet's heavenly ascension), is the only prophet to have passed *beyond* the seven heavens.[58]

We can therefore summarise al-Jīlī's position on the identity of the Pole in the following way: Muhammad, both as the Muhammadan Reality and as Muhammad the Messenger of God, is the one true Pole, from the beginning until the end of time. However, the station of Pole is also attained by at least some of the other prophets and the pre- and post-Muhammadan 'Friends of God'. These Friends of God, however, seem to be Poles only in a lesser sense, that is, as reflections or embodiments of Muhammad, the one true Pole. This leads us directly on to the idea of the Muhammadan Reality, to which we shall now turn our attention.

Notes

1 See Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 438, s.v. "*Quṭb*"; Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 160–163; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 130; 'A. al-Jīlānī, *Dīwān Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, ed. Y. Ziedan (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), s.v. "*al-quṭb*".
2 See Jamil, "Caliph and Qutb"; N. Jamil, *Ethics and Poetry in Sixth Century Arabia* (Trumpington, UK: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2018), 332.
3 See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 909.
4 For Ibn 'Arabī's conception of the 'Unique Ones' and 'Ones Brought Near', see Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 128–131; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 111–115.
5 See Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 58, 91–99.
6 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:573, quoted in al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 912. See also Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:136–137; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 913.
7 Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitāb Manzil al-quṭb wa-maqāmihi wa-ḥālihi*, 2, in *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, vol. 2 (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Jam'iyyat Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmaniyyah, 1367 AH [=1948]), no page numbers.
8 See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 914, note 1, where she notes that Ibn 'Arabī does not explicitly identify the Pole with the Perfect Human.
9 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 49–50.
10 See Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 154–175; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 116–140.
11 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:5; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 912. For the full passage in which this statement occurs, see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 93.
12 Al-Qāshānī, *Mu'jam*, 162. See also Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1327–1330.
13 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:5; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 912.
14 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 50.
15 Quoted in Nūrbakhsh, *Farhang*, 6:5.
16 Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 214; Nūrbakhsh, *Farhang*, 6:6.
17 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:6; cf. Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94–95.
18 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:555; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 912.
19 Similarly, the thirteenth century Persian Sufi thinker 'Azīz-i Nasafī, who drew upon Ibn 'Arabī among others in his conception of the Perfect Human, stressed the point that there is only one Perfect Human or Pole in the world at any one time. See L. Ridgeon, *'Azīz Nasafī* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1998), 176–177.
20 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:6. See also Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94.
21 For an exegesis of this passage, see S. Hirtenstein, "The Healer of Wounds: Interpreting Human Existence in the Light of Alchemy and Ascension", Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society Oxford Symposium 2018, 19 May 2018, www.ibnarabisociety.org/podcasts/archives/1807/hirtenstein.mp3.
22 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:151; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar fī bayān 'ulūm al-shaykh al-akbar*, ed. A 'Umar (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1998), 12; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94; G. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 78–79.

23 Al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 915.
24 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:5; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 911.
25 See Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:7; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94. See also Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 135; Lipton, *Rethinking*, 78.
26 The 'Pegs' (*awtād*) are the highest members of the cosmic hierarchy, and are four in number. See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 517. Ibn 'Arabī indicates here that Jesus and Elijah are the 'two Imams' and Khiḍr the fourth 'Peg'. See Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:7; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94.
27 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:7.
28 Ibid., 3:182.
29 See ibid., 2:8; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 95.
30 See G. Vermes, *The Resurrection* (London: Penguin, 2008), 32–34; J. Reeves and A. Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, vol. 1: *Sources from Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–2, 210–253.
31 See e.g. al-Tha'labī, *'Arā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā', or, "Lives of the prophets"*, tr. W.M. Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 83–85; Reeves and Reed, *Enoch*, 216–217, 225–228. The motif is cited by the Persian Sufi 'Azīz-i Nasafī in his discussion of the 'spiritual death' of the Friends of God. See Ridgeon, *'Azīz Nasafī*, 181. Similarly, Rūzbihān Baqlī, another important Persian Sufi thinker, lists Idrīs among the four special individuals (the others being Khiḍr, Elijah, and Jesus) who were "carried off alive from death". See ibid., 202, note 68.
32 Jamil, *Ethics and Poetry*, 332–334.
33 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 75.
34 Ibid.
35 Note that whereas in the *Futūḥāt* Ibn 'Arabī appears to draw a distinction between Idrīs and Elijah/Ilyās, in the *Fuṣūṣ* he explicitly identifies them. See ibid., 181: "Ilyās is Idrīs, who was a prophet before Noah."
36 Ibid., 181. Cf. 2 Kings 11, where a horse-drawn chariot of fire appears to the prophet Elijah, who is carried up to heaven in a whirlwind.
37 For the connection between Idrīs and Hermes and their occult associations, see F.E. Peters, "Hermes and Harran: The Roots of Arabic-Islamic Occultism", *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, ed. E. Savage-Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 55–86, esp. 59–60.
38 See R. Nettler, "Ibn 'Arabi's Gloss on the Prophet Yunus: Sufism and the Continuity of a Common Religious Culture", *The Religion of the Other: Essays in Honour of Mohamed Talbi*, ed. M. Ben-Madani (London: Maghreb Publications, 2013), 53–60.
39 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:151, quoted in Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94; Lipton, *Rethinking*, 78–79. See also Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitāb Manzil al-quṭb*, in *Rasā'il*, 2:6: "The most perfect (*akmal*) of the Poles is the Muhammadan."
40 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah*, 490.
41 See ibid., 491.
42 Ibid., 457.
43 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 3:997. For an alternative translation (and notes on the Sufi thinkers referred to in this passage), see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 92–93.
44 See e.g. Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 75, 90; H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, tr. R. Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 45; Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 168–169; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 155, note 98.
45 The key conceptual and semantic building blocks of both the Sufi metaphysical idea of *walāyah* or Perfect Human and the Shī'ī doctrine of the Imamate are already discernible in the Umayyad conception of the caliphate. See Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 24–42. Jamil, "Caliph and Qutb", has shown how the key elements of this conception have their origins in pre-Islamic Arabian ideas.
46 M. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shî'a Become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75, no. 1 (1955), 1–13, 2. A similar argument been made by Valerie

Hoffman, who proposes that the centrality of the Prophet and his family within modern Egyptian Sufism (perhaps under the influence of Ibn ʻArabian ideas) is possible evidence in support of Hodgson's statement. See V. Hoffman, "Devotion to the Prophet and His Family in Egyptian Sufism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 4 (1992), 615–637, 615.

47 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210.

48 Ibid.

49 It is clear that al-Jīlī did identify the Pole with the Muhammadan Reality. For instance, he tells us in chapter 51 that "the angel called the spirit" (*al-malak al-musammá bi-al-rūḥ*) is both synonymous with the Muhammadan Reality and with "the Pole of the orbits of created beings" (*quṭb aflāk al-makhlūqāt*). Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 31; Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabi*, 251.

50 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 204–205. See also Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 31; Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabi*, 251.

51 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 188–189.

52 Ibid., 260; A. Tafaẓẓolī and B. Hourcade, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online edition), s.v. "Damavand".

53 See Rosenthal, "Ibn ʻArabī", 15.

54 See Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:151, where, immediately preceding his aforementioned account of his vision of 25 mysterious figures, he refers to "the perfected Poles (*aqṭāb…al-mukammalīn*) in other communities than ours, who preceded us in time".

55 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 128. See also ibid., 126:

> Nevertheless, each one of the unique ones (*afrād*) and the poles (*aqṭāb*) [other than David and Solomon] possesses mastery (*al-taṣarruf*) over the whole of the existential kingdom (*al-mamlakah al-wujūdiyyah*), and each of them knows what trembles (*ikhtalaja*) day and night, besides the languages of the birds.

56 Ibid., 236.

57 Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 114.

58 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 194.

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5 The Muhammadan Reality

Ibn ‘Arabian antecedents

The Perfect Human, writes Albert Hourani in his description of the Ibn ‘Arabian idea, “is a visible embodiment of the eternal archetype, the ‘Muhammadan Light’”.[1] The concept of the ‘Muhammadan Light’ (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*),[2] sometimes also called the ‘Muhammadan Spirit’ (*al-rūḥ al-muḥammadī*),[3] or, as is most common in Ibn ‘Arabian literature, ‘the Muhammadan Reality’ (*al-ḥaqīqah al-muḥammadiyyah*), is an important element of the idea of the Perfect Human. It has antecedents in the thought of the early mystics al-Ḥakīm Tirmidhī (d. 869) and Sahl Tustarī (d. 896),[4] with whose ideas Ibn ‘Arabī engaged directly.[5] Thus Sahl wrote in his mystical commentary on the Qur’an:

> When God willed to create Muḥammad, He made appear a light from His light. When it reached the veil of Majesty it bowed in prostration before God. God created from its prostration a mighty column like crystal glass of light that is outwardly and inwardly translucent.[6]

According to Sahl, God subsequently created everything else out of this light.[7]

Similarly, in Ibn ‘Arabian thought, the basic idea associated with this concept is that Muhammad existed as a cosmic reality – the Muhammadan Reality – prior to the creation of the phenomenal world. Indeed, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, the Muhammadan Reality was the first thing to receive phenomenal existence, and it was from the Muhammadan Reality, moreover, that the rest of the phenomenal world drew its existence.[8] Ibn ‘Arabī roots these ideas in a hadith in which the Prophet Muhammad says, “I was a prophet even while Adam was between water and clay”,[9] as well as in another, uncanonical hadith which states that the first created thing was the light or spirit of Muhammad.[10] Based upon a variant of the latter hadith that identifies that first created thing with ‘the intellect’,[11] Ibn ‘Arabī also draws a connection between the Muhammadan Reality and the Neoplatonic ‘First Intellect’ (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*), which, in the classic expression of the doctrine by Plotinus, both receives the emanation of ‘the One’ (its ‘passive’ aspect) and gives rise to a further emanation from itself (its ‘active’ aspect).[12] Thus in chapter 11 of the *Futūḥāt*, after describing how God manifested Himself to the primordial

'dust' (*al-habā'*) – which he identifies with the 'prime matter' (*al-hayūlá*) of the philosophers – Ibn 'Arabī informs the reader:

> There was nothing nearer to Him within that dust, in terms of its capacity to receive Him (*qubūlan*), than the Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – which is called the Intellect (*al-'aql*). So he [namely, Muhammad] is the lord (*sayyid*) of the whole universe and the first thing to appear within existence (*awwal ẓāhir fī al-wujūd*) … And the world itself [comes] from his manifestation (*tajallīhi*).[13]

Furthermore, Ibn 'Arabī makes a point of emphasising not only that the Muhammadan Reality preceded and gave rise to the rest of creation, but also, more particularly, that it preceded the other prophets and messengers, who drew their prophetic status and knowledge from it.[14] Thus he informs the reader of the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> Every one of the prophets, from Adam to the last prophet, took from the lamp of the Seal of Prophets (*miskhāt khātam al-nabiyyīn*), even if the existence of his "clay-form" (*ṭīnatihi*) came later, for he [has always been] existent through his reality (*bi-ḥaqīqatihi*).[15]

In keeping with these ideas, Ibn 'Arabī's interpreters identified the Muhammadan Reality as the 'first entification' (*al-ta'ayyun al-awwal*) or 'first manifestation' (*al-tajallī al-awwal*) from the divine essence. Thus al-Qūnawī tells us in his *Fukūk* that Muhammad "was the first entification through which the Unique Essence became entified, before any other entification".[16] Likewise al-Farghānī writes, "That luminous first manifestation (*al-tajallī al-awwal al-nūrī*) was in the first instance – as we have said – his [namely, Muhammad's] light – May God bless him and grant him peace."[17] Similarly al-Qāshānī informs the reader of his commentary on the chapter on Muhammad in the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> He [namely, Muhammad] was the first entification (*awwal ta'ayyun*) by which the unqualified one essence was entified, prior to every entification. So through him He made appear the infinite entifications … So he encompasses all the entifications, and he is a Unique One (*wāḥid fard*) within existence. He has no counterpart, for no one equal to him was entified at [his] level. There is nothing above it except for the absolute unqualified one essence that is above and beyond every entification and attribute.[18]

In a similar vein the Persian poet Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī writes in the preface to his *Lamā'at*, a reworking in Persian poetry of the central ideas of the *Fuṣūṣ* based on al-Qūnawī's lectures on that book:

> Praise be to God, who enlightened the face of His beloved through the manifestations of His beauty (*tajalliyyāt al-jamāl*), such that it shone like a pearl in the light, and who made visible within him the utmost perfection

> (*ghāyāt al-kamāl*), through which He found joy, and created him first with His hand, and purified him, while Adam was still nothing worthy of mention, and while the pen had not yet written nor the tablet been written upon. For he is the treasure of existence and the key to the treasuries of generosity; the *qiblah* of the One who brings into existence and that which exists; the owner of the banner of praise and the praised station; from the tongue of whose rank 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ says,
> "I was a son of Adam in form (*ṣūratan*); and I have within him a secret meaning (*ma'ná*), which testifies to my fatherhood [of him]."[19]

'Irāqī then goes on to describe Muhammad's precedence over creation in his own Persian verse:

> He [namely, Muhammad] said, "Even if I am among the sons of Adam in form (*bi-ṣūrat*), with respect to my spiritual level (*martabat*) I am better than him in every respect.
>
> When I look in the mirror (*āyinah*), [I see] the image of my own beauty; the whole world, in reality, becomes my form (*muṣavvaram*).
>
> I am the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of the sun of the heavens; do not be surprised if the particles of beings become the locus of my manifestation (*maẓharam*).
>
> What are the holy spirits? They are the outward form of my inner meaning (*nimūdār-i ma'nīy-am*). What are the shapes of men? They are the protectors of my form (*nigahdār-i paykaram*).
>
> The ocean is a sprinkling of my overflowing effusion (*fayḍ-i fāyiḍam*). Pure light is a flash of my luminous light.
>
> From the heavens to the earth, everything is a particle before the sun of my enlightened mind.
>
> The world would be illuminated by the illumination of my essence (*dhāt-i man*) if I were to tear down the curtain of my attributes (*pardah-yi ṣifāt-i khud*).
>
> The water from which immortal Khiḍr was given life, what is it? It is a drop from my Abundant Spring (*ḥawḍ-i kawtharam*).
>
> That breath from which the Messiah gave life to the dead was a breath from my spirit nurturing breath.
>
> In summary, my essence is the locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*) of all things; indeed, I am the greatest name (*ism-i a'ẓam*), when I look at reality."
>
> May the prayers of God be upon him, and upon all his family and companions.[20]

With respect, finally, to the Muhammadan Reality being the source of the realities of the other prophets, we might again cite al-Farghānī:

> All of these [prophetic realities] are a specification of the universal Muhammadan Reality, which encompasses all of them, and which is called "the Reality of Realities" (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*), which flows (*sāriyah*) through

> everything in the manner of the flowing of the whole through its parts, and which is the original, most ancient, greatest and first isthmus (*barzakh*). Then there branched off from these specified, divine realities which arose from them, and to which are attributed the realities of all the prophets – Peace be upon them – universals, roots, and categories.[21]

Similarly, al-Qayṣarī writes in chapter nine of his *Muqaddimah*, which is devoted to the Muhammadan Reality:

> So that Muhammadan Reality appears in particular forms, each at the level appropriate to the people of that era and time, according to what the name of the age at that time entails in terms of the appearance of perfection, and these are the forms of the prophets.[22]

One can understand from the above why a number of scholars have identified the idea of the Muhammadan Reality with a kind of logos doctrine.[23] For the Jewish Neoplatonic philosopher Philo of Alexandria (first century BCE), the *logos* (word) of God constituted "the *dunameis*, the powers of God who created the world and governed it".[24] In the New Testament, meanwhile, the role of logos is assigned to Jesus Christ. Paul, drawing upon the *homo imago dei* motif (see above) in his Letter to the Colossians, describes Jesus as

> the image (*eikōn*) of the invisible God, the firstborn (*ho prōtotokos*) over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and from him.
>
> (Col. 1:15–16)[25]

At the beginning of John's Gospel, meanwhile, Jesus is famously identified both with the "word" (*ho logos*) and the "true light" (*to phōs to alēthinon*) (John 1:1–18), the second of which foreshadows the Sufi concept of the "Muhammadan Light".

It is clear that the Ibn ʿArabian Sufis conceive of the Muhammadan Reality in a similar way as a metaphysical reality that plays an important role in the creation or manifestation of the phenomenal world. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that, even as a quasi-logos figure, the Muhammadan Reality in the view of Ibn ʿArabī and his leading interpreters (at least prior to al-Jīlī) is not identical with the essence of God or with God Himself; rather, it is the first manifestation or 'entification' (*taʿayyun*) of the divine essence within the phenomenal world. In this regard, the Ibn ʿArabian conception of the Muhammadan Reality is perhaps closer to Philo's idea of the logos than to the Christian doctrine, for:

> to see the *logos* as the ultimate expression of the absolute is for Philo an absolute impiety. In fact, the *logos* is only God's shadow, His image, the instrument by which He created the world, or in a more anthropomorphic way, His "first-born son" or His deputy (*Agr.* 51).[26]

Ibn ‘Arabī’s similar differentiation between God in His essence and the Muhammadan Reality is something to keep in mind when we come to look at al-Jīlī’s treatment of the concept, where the distinction between the Muhammadan Reality and divine essence is not always so clear-cut.

Al-Jīlī’s position

An important text for clarifying al-Jīlī’s view of the Muhammadan Reality is the opening of chapter 50 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, titled ‘On the Angel that is called “The Spirit” (*fī al-malak al-musammá bi-al-rūḥ*)’:[27]

> Know that this angel is the one who, in the technical terminology of the Sufis, is called “the Real through which [all things are] created” (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*) and the Muhammadan Reality. God – May He be exalted – gazed upon this angel, in the sense that through it He gazed upon Himself. He created it from His light and He created the world from it, and He made it the locus of His gaze within the world (*maḥall naẓarihi min al-‘ālam*). Among its names are “God’s Command” (*amr Allāh*), and it is the best of existents (*afḍal al-mawjūdāt*) and the highest and most elevated in rank … God made revolve around it the mill of existents (*adāra Allāh ‘alayhi raḥā al-mawjūdāt*) and made it the Pole of the orbit of created beings (*quṭb falak al-makhlūqāt*). In everything that God – May He be exalted – created it has a particular face (*wajh khāṣṣ*) through which it is attached to Him …
>
> Then know that since God created this angel as a mirror for His essence, God – May He be exalted – does not make His essence appear except through this angel, and His appearance within all created beings is only through His attributes. So it is the Pole of the lower world and the world to come (*quṭb al-‘ālam al-dunyawī wa-al-ukhrawī*), and the Pole of the inhabitants of Paradise and the inhabitants of the Fire and the inhabitants of the Sandhill and the inhabitants of the Heights. The divine reality in the knowledge of God – May He be exalted – required that He not create anything without this angel having a face within it, with the orbit of that created being revolving around its face, such that it is its Pole. That angel is not made known to any of God’s creation, with the exception of the Perfect Human. So if a Friend of God (*walīy*) comes to know it, his knowledge is of things which, if he attains realisation of them (*taḥaqqaqa bi-hā*), he becomes a Pole around which the mill of all of existence revolves, by virtue of deputyship (*al-niyābah*) and loaning (*al-‘āriyah*).[28]

There are several points pertaining to al-Jīlī’s conception of the Muhammadan Reality to draw out of this passage. First and perhaps the most obvious is al-Jīlī’s clear identification of the Muhammadan Reality with the Pole. Al-Jīlī not only tells us on a number of occasions here that *quṭb* is one of the names of the angel called ‘the Spirit’, but he also uses the associated image of the ‘mill’ (*raḥā*),[29] and defines this ‘Spirit’, using the classic Ibn ‘Arabian definition of the

Pole, as the locus from which God gazes upon the world. Furthermore, it is implied that this Pole that is identical to the Spirit and the Muhammadan Reality is the one true Pole, an idea that fits with al-Jīlī's statement that Muhammad is the one true Pole from the beginning to the end of existence, which we looked at in the previous chapter. Al-Jīlī's statement in this regard that this one true Pole is only known to the Perfect Human makes sense when we remember that the one true Pole *is* the Perfect Human. His indication that other 'Friends of God' might come to know it indirectly – i.e. through "things" – and thereby attain the rank of Pole "by virtue of deputyship and loaning", picks up on Ibn 'Arabī's view that the one true Pole of the present age – Idrīs – has "deputies" (*nuwwāb*) from among the Friends of God who are capable of taking on the characteristics of the Pole.

Also of a piece with Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters' views on the Muhammadan Reality is al-Jīlī's indication here that the Muhammadan Reality is a type of logos-figure through which God gives existence to the rest of creation. In this regard, al-Jīlī refers not only to the Muhammadan Reality as a "spirit" and "light" but also as "God's command" (*amr Allāh*), all of which, as al-Jīlī himself indicates, are Qur'anic terms. The last term in particular is an important one in Islamic Neoplatonic literature, especially the Ismaili Neoplatonic tradition. As Michael Ebstein has shown, just as philosophically minded Ismailis had viewed God's command as "the direct source for the supreme status of the prophets and *imāms*", so too did Ibn 'Arabī see it as the "source of prophetic revelation … and … of mystical experience shared by the prophets and 'the Friends of God' (*awliyā'*) alike".[30] We can therefore see that, for both the Ismaili Neoplatonists and for Ibn 'Arabī, God's command plays a similar role to that envisioned for the Muhammadan Reality in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition, that is, as the "lamp" from which the prophets and Friends of God derive their "light" of prophethood or divine friendship. This similarity explains al-Jīlī's use of the term here. Similarly, further on in chapter 51 al-Jīlī lists some more synonyms for the Spirit or Muhammadan Reality. These include 'The Highest Pen' (*al-qalam al-a'lá*), 'The Spirit of Muhammad' (*rūḥ Muhammad*), 'The First Intellect' (*al-'aql al-awwal*),[31] and 'The Divine Spirit' (*al-rūḥ al-ilāhī*).[32] As we have already seen for some of these names, the use of these terms as synonyms for the Muhammadan Reality is common in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters.[33]

How, it might then be asked, does al-Jīlī present the relationship between God and the Muhammadan Reality in the passage quoted above? In answer to this question we might turn first to yet another of the names that he uses as a synonym for the Muhammadan Reality: 'The Real through which [all things are] created' (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*). This is also a term that al-Jīlī adopts from Ibn 'Arabī, who also uses it as a synonym for the Muhammadan Reality, and who himself seems to have adopted it from the twelfth century Andalusian Sufi Ibn Barrajān, who derived it in turn from Qur'an 15:85: "We only created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them '*bi-al-ḥaqq*'."[34] As its name suggests, in Ibn 'Arabian thought '*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*' denotes the creator God. This becomes clearer in those instances where Ibn 'Arabī completes the

phrase and tells us *what* exactly it is that is created through the Real: for instance, in chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt*, he refers to "the Real through which the levels and entities of the world were created" (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi marātib al-ʿālam wa-aʿyānuhu*), which he identifies with the creative aspect of God called 'the breath of the All-Merciful' (*nafas al-raḥmān*).[35] In associating the Muhammadan Reality with '*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*' in chapter 51 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, then, al-Jīlī appears to be indicating that the Muhammadan Reality is identical with the creator God, or, in terms of his scheme of the levels of existence, with God at the level of 'divinity' (*al-ulūhiyyah*), the level from which God gives all the other levels of existence their reality. This is in keeping with his and the wider Ibn ʿArabian tradition's conception of the Muhammadan Reality as a type of *logos*.

If the Muhammadan Reality is identical with the creator God, then this would seem to imply that it exists on a *lower* level of existence than the simple essence of God, which is above and beyond qualifications such as 'creator'. The Muhammadan Reality, in other words, would appear to be equivalent to *al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*, but not to *al-ḥaqq* pure and simple. Al-Jīlī in fact clarifies the relationship between the divine essence and the Muhammadan Reality in the above passage when he tells us that God created the angel that is synonymous with the Muhammadan Reality as a 'mirror' for His essence, an image which cannot help but call to mind the famous opening passage of the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*.[36] Evidently a mirror-image or reflection of a thing is not identical to the thing itself; hence it seems that in al-Jīlī's view the Muhammadan Reality is not identical with the divine essence, a view that would accord with the tendency in the Ibn ʿArabian tradition to identify the Muhammadan Reality as 'the first entification', 'the first manifestation', 'the first intellect', etc., terms which place the Muhammadan Reality on the second plane of existence. At the same time, however, al-Jīlī's assertion that it is only through the Muhammadan Reality that the essence can be known – other created existents being manifestations of his names and attributes – does establish an intimate relationship between the divine essence and the Muhammadan Reality. Indeed, in this regard we might note that while in the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ* Ibn ʿArabī describes the world as the mirror in which God makes His *names and attributes* appear – the Perfect Human being the "polishing of that mirror" – here al-Jīlī describes the Muhammadan Reality as the mirror in which God's *essence* appears. In this regard, it might be said that in al-Jīlī's view, the Muhammadan Reality straddles two of the highest levels of existence, i.e. the level of the essence and the level of divinity.

This blurring between the divine essence and the Muhammadan Reality in al-Jīlī's thought becomes even more pronounced in his discussion in the chapter on the Qur'an (chapter 34) of the effect that the revelation of the Qur'an has on Muhammad, which we looked at above in the context of al-Jīlī's view that, on receiving the Qur'an, Muhammad's humanness disappears. In the course of that discussion, al-Jīlī remarks that, through his essence (*dhāt*), Muhammad was "the essence itself" (*ʿayn al-dhāt*). Establishing what al-Jīlī means by this requires us

working out what he means by the term *dhāt.* The term is a very common one in philosophical, theological, and Sufi literature (including the writings of Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters). When used without a qualifying adjective, it often refers to the essence of God.[37] When al-Jīlī writes that Muhammad's essence is "*ʻayn al-dhāt*" here, then, it seems likely that the latter term refers to the divine essence; indeed, it is hard to imagine what else it could to refer to here.

In the first chapter of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, which is specifically devoted to *al-dhāt*, al-Jīlī defines this divine essence as that upon which all of God's names and attributes depend, the implication being that the essence in itself is free of qualification by names and attributes. This divine essence, he goes on, is a "pure existent" (*mawjūd maḥḍ*), which is to say, in Ibn ʻArabian terms, that it possesses "absolute existence" (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), the implication again being that it is free of any qualification or limitation. By contrast, the essence of created things (*dhāt al-makhlūqāt*) – and here it should be noted that al-Jīlī does use the term *dhāt* in relation to non-divine beings – is "an existent attached to non-existence" (*mawjūd mulḥaq bi-al-ʻadam*), which is to say in Ibn ʻArabian terms, that it possesses "limited" or "possible" existence (*al-wujūd al-muqayyad*, *al-wujūd al-mumkin*).[38] Al-Jīlī thus sets up a clear distinction between the essence of God and the essences of His creatures, as in the traditional Islamic theological conception.[39]

This clear distinction is considerably blurred, however, by al-Jīlī's apparent identification here of the divine essence with the essence of Muhammad. Muhammad, al-Jīlī seems to be saying, is not marked by limited or potential existence like other created beings, but is in fact, in his essence, a pure, unqualified being like God Himself. This apparent identification of the Muhammadan and divine essences is highly relevant for our understanding of al-Jīlī's conception of the Muhammadan Reality, for it seems to me that when he writes here of Muhammad's *dhāt*, it is the Muhammadan Reality that he has in mind; indeed, it should be noted in this regard that *al-ḥaqīqah* is one of the synonyms commonly given for *al-dhāt* in lexicons of philosophical Arabic.[40]

Taking this to its ultimate conclusion, might it therefore be said that the Muhammadan Reality is in fact identical to the divine essence? In the passage from chapter 34 and elsewhere in *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his other writings,[41] al-Jīlī does appear to go further than Ibn ʻArabī and his other main interpreters in blurring the distinction between God and the metaphysical reality of the Prophet. Yet, as we have seen, in other places al-Jīlī repeats the standard Ibn ʻArabian line that the Muhammadan Reality was the first *created* thing, and identifies it with names (*al-ʻaql al-awwal*, *al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bi-hi*, etc.) that denote something other than – and below – the divine essence.[42] Furthermore, it is not entirely clear from al-Jīlī's statement that the essence of Muhammad is "the essence itself" whether al-Jīlī identifies Muhammad's essence with the divine essence in its utter simplicity, i.e. the first level of existence in his scheme, or with the divine essence at the level of its first descent into phenomenality (i.e. the level of *al-aḥadiyyah*). Al-Jīlī thus leaves just enough room for ambiguity on the matter to allow his readers to believe that he maintains a distinction

between the divine essence and the Muhammadan Reality. Nevertheless, the distinction is a fine one, and it seems reasonable to conclude that he goes as far as it is possible to go here without explicitly stating that the Muhammadan Reality is identical to the divine essence, and therefore that Muhammad is a fully divine being.

One further important aspect of the Muhammadan Reality that we have not yet considered in our analysis of al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea is the Muhammadan Reality's role as a source for the prophetic and 'saintly' realities of the other prophets and Friends of God. As we have seen, this was an important feature of the idea in the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition, and may lie behind the identification of the Muhammadan Reality and the divine command in both Ibn 'Arabī and al-Jīlī's work. It is treated by al-Jīlī in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* (which, it will be remembered, is devoted to the idea of the Perfect Human), in the context of his aforementioned account of a spiritual vision that he experienced when in the company of his Sufi *shaykh* al-Jabartī.

> I met with him [namely, Muhammad] – May God bless him and grant him peace – while he was in the form (*ṣūrah*) of my *shaykh*, Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Ismā'īl al-Jabartī. I did not know that he was the Prophet, but I knew that he was the *shaykh*. This was among the loci of witnessing (*mashāhid*) in which I witnessed him in Zabid, in the year 796 [=1393/1394]. And the secret of this matter is his ability (*tamakkun*) – May God bless him and grant him peace – to take on the form of every form (*al-taṣawwar bi-kull ṣūrah*). So if a person of good conduct (*al-adīb*) sees him in the Muhammadan forms (*al-ṣuwar al-Muhammadiyyah*) that he had during his life, then he calls him by his name [namely, "Muhammad"]. But if he sees him in a certain [other] form, and knows that he is Muhammad, he only calls him by the name of that form. Subsequently, he only applies that name to the Muhammadan Reality.
>
> Look at how, when he [namely, Muhammad] appeared in the form of al-Shiblī – May God be pleased with him – al-Shiblī said to his student, "I testify that I am the Messenger of God." And the student was a man of unveiling (*ṣāḥib kashf*), so he knew him [namely, he knew that he was Muhammad]. So he said, "I testify that you are the Messenger of God." This is something irreproachable (*amr ghayr mankūr*) … [But] this is the opposite of unveiling, for if it is unveiled to you that the Muhammadan Reality is manifest in one of the forms of the sons of Adam (*mutajalliyyah fī ṣūrah min ṣuwar al-ādamiyyīn*), you must apply the name of that form to the Muhammadan Reality. And you must conduct yourself (*tata'addab*) with the bearer of that form in the way that you would conduct yourself with Muhammad, since unveiling has given you [the knowledge] that Muhammad has taken on the form of that form (*mutaṣawwar bi-tilk al-ṣūrah*). It is not permissible, after witnessing Muhammad within it [namely, that form], to interact with it as you were interacting with it before.[43]

Here we have a fascinating elaboration – based on what al-Jīlī claims to be his own personal experience – upon his aforementioned idea that the one true Pole – Muhammad – has the ability to appear in different 'garments'. A number of points deserve particular emphasis, I think. The first concerns the identity of those individuals or 'forms' in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears. Al-Jīlī identifies two particular individuals as examples of such 'forms' for the appearance of the Muhammadan Reality, both of them illustrious names from the history of Sufism: his own *shaykh*, Ismā'īl al-Jabartī, the leading Sufi in the Yemen of al-Jīlī's time, and the famous Baghdadi Sufi of the classical period and student of Junayd, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī, both of whom we have already come across in this book. The choice of these two particular individuals is probably not accidental. Both appear in the Sufi tradition as 'intoxicated' Sufis known for their elevated spiritual station, mystical experiences, allusive sayings (*ishārāt*) and ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*), and miracle-working (*karāmāt*) – as we might expect of individuals in whom the Muhammadan Reality is supposedly manifest. Thus Farīd al-dīn 'Aṭṭār, for instance, in his hagiography of the Sufi 'Friends of God', *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, describes al-Shiblī in the following terms:

> That [man] who was submerged in the sea of [God's] kingdom (*ān gharq-i baḥr-i dawlat*), that lightning bolt from the cloud of [God's] grandeur, that neck-breaker of the pretenders, that most distinguished of the pious, that ray from the sensible and intelligible world, the *shaykh* of the time (*shaykh-i waqt*), Abū Bakr-i Shiblī – May God have mercy upon him – was among the great and illustrious *shaykhs* (*az kibār ū ajalla-yi mashāyikh būd*), and among the most highly respected and most decent men of the path, and the head of the [Sufi] folk (*sayyid-i qawm*), the leader of the Sufis (*imām-i ahl-i taṣawwuf*) and the singular one of the age (*waḥīd-i 'aṣr*), whose spiritual state (*ḥāl*) and knowledge (*'ilm*) were without compare, and whose subtle sayings (*nukat*), allusive sayings (*ishārāt*), symbolic sayings (*rumūz*), expressions (*'ibārāt*), spiritual efforts (*riyāḍāt*) and miraculous deeds (*karāmāt*) were beyond limitation and enumeration.[44]

'Aṭṭār goes on to cite many extraordinary anecdotes relating to al-Shiblī and mystically inclined sayings attributed to him. While 'Aṭṭār does not include the anecdote about Muhammad appearing in the form of al-Shiblī cited by al-Jīlī here, he does give some indication that al-Shiblī had a special connection with the Prophet: in one anecdote, for instance, the Prophet enters a gathering of Junayd and his companions, places a kiss on al-Shiblī's forehead, and leaves.[45] It is likely that al-Jīlī would have been familiar with this body of lore concerning al-Shiblī's elevated spiritual status; indeed, as we saw earlier, elsewhere in *al-Insān al-kāmil* he quotes an allusive saying of al-Shiblī's by way of illustrating the miraculous powers of the Friends of God.[46] Moreover, the attentive reader will have noticed that 'Aṭṭār describes al-Shiblī in terms that are reminiscent of the Ibn 'Arabian description of the Pole – for instance, when he calls

him "the *shaykh* of the time (*shaykh-i waqt*)" and "the singular one of the age" (*waḥīd-i ʿaṣr*). If al-Jīlī shared this view of al-Shiblī as the Pole of his time, then it would go some way to explaining his choice of the latter as an example of those in whom the Muhammadan Reality has become manifest.

Al-Jīlī's choice of al-Jabartī as the other example of such a figure is the result of what al-Jīlī claims to be his own personal experience. Given that we of course have no way of verifying this claim, we might note here that al-Jabartī enjoyed something of a similar reputation to al-Shiblī among Yemeni Sufis. Thus al-Sharjī al-Zabīdī (d. 1488), in his biographical dictionary of Yemeni Sufis, *Ṭabaqāt al-khawāṣṣ*, recounts numerous miraculous deeds attributed to al-Jabartī and assigns to him a similarly elevated spiritual station as ʿAṭṭār assigns al-Shiblī:

> The great *shaykh* (*al-shaykh al-kabīr*), the mystical knower of God – May He be exalted – (*al-ʿārif bi-Alāh taʿālá*), the instructor (*al-murabbī*), without qualification the shaykh of the shaykhs of the path (*shaykh shuyūkh al-ṭarīqah ʿalá al-iṭlāq*), the unanimously agreed upon leader of the people of reality (*imam ahl al-ḥaqīqah bi-al-ittifāq*), the performer of miraculous deeds that broke [God's customary arrangement of things] (*ṣāḥib al-karāmāt al-khāriqah*) and the bearer of veritable spiritual states (*al-aḥwāl al-ṣādiqah*), at the beginning of his life, a group of great *shaykhs* accompanied him, and their spiritual blessing (*barakah*) appeared within him, and he was granted many mystical revelations (*futiḥa ʿalayhi bi-futūḥāt kathīrah*), such that he perceived the deaths of those who were to come after him. And he became the Unique One of his epoch (*farīd dahrihi*) and the singular one of his age (*waḥīd ʿaṣrihi*).[47]

These last titles, in particular, indicate that al-Jabartī was viewed by the Sufis of Yemen as the Pole of his age, a view which we know al-Jīlī to have agreed with. From all this we might conclude, then, that in al-Jīlī's view, the Muhammadan Reality appears particularly – or perhaps exclusively – in the Pole of a particular age, who is probably to be identified with the leading Sufi 'Friend of God' of that era. This would accord with his idea that there is one true Pole – Muhammad – who takes on the 'garments' and names of other, lesser Poles; indeed, in identifying these individuals at the end of the passage as the 'viceregents' (*khulafāʾ*) of Muhammad,[48] al-Jīlī is echoing Ibn 'Arabī's identification of the leading 'Friends of God' as 'deputies' (*nuwwāb*) of the one true Pole.[49] It is therefore evident that these two ideas – that of the Pole and that of the Muhammadan Reality – are intimately related in his Sufi metaphysics; in fact, the passage under discussion comes in the context of his discussion of the Pole.

A second, related issue from al-Jīlī's discussion of the Muhammadan Reality in chapter 60 to take into consideration concerns the question of what to call the individual in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears. Al-Jīlī displays considerable – and perhaps surprising – interest in this issue, devoting around half of his discussion to it, and laying down a rule for his reader to follow. Stated in its simplest

form, the rule is that if you witness the Muhammadan Reality in the form (or one of the forms) of Muhammad the historical figure, then you should call him Muhammad, whereas if you witness the Muhammadan Reality in the form of another person, you should call him by that person's name, and should thereafter refrain from using that name for anyone else.[50]

What, it might reasonably be asked, is the reason for al-Jīlī's particular interest in this issue? As he does not explicitly answer this question himself, we must resort to speculation. It is possible, for instance, that his discussion of this issue is a response to a question that he might have received from a fellow member of al-Jabartī's Sufi circle. Alternatively, he may here be relaying a view that al-Jabartī himself conveyed to him when al-Jīlī informed him of his vision of the Muhammadan Reality in him. While this is pure guesswork, there are two other possible explanations that have a stronger textual basis. The first is that al-Jīlī's 'rule' on what to call the Muhammadan Reality is connected to his esotericism, that is, with his concern to preserve the highest 'mysteries' (*asrār*) from the uninitiated and those hostile to this kind of Sufism. Al-Jīlī demonstrates this concern on several occasions in *al-Insān al-kāmil*. Thus, for instance, at the end of chapter 51 (which we have looked at above), he writes of the need to conceal the mysteries alluded to in that chapter:

> As for concealing the matter (*katm al-amr*), it is due to [people's] incapacity (*'adm al-ṭāqah*) to plunge into the sea. For [their] intellects fall short of perception (*al-'uqūl taqṣur 'an al-idrāk*), and cannot escape their limitation (*qayd*). All of this is the [mere] external shells of exoteric expressions (*qushūr al-'ibārāt*) and the graves of allusive expressions (*qubūr al-ishārāt*), which he have made a veil (*niqāb*) over the [true] face [of God], in order to veil it [namely, the true face] from those who are unqualified for it. So understand, if you are perceptive of speech, that the faces that appear in outward forms (*al-ẓawāhir*) are the 'firstlings' (*al-abkār*) that are covered up in inner forms (*istatarat fī al-bawāṭin*), and are veils over those faces. And [rational] thoughts (*al-afkār*) are perplexed by (*tuḥār fī*) the covering up of this inverted matter.[51]

In adopting this esoteric stance, it should be noted, al-Jīlī was following the common practice of the Ibn 'Arabian tradition,[52] and, indeed, of the medieval Sufi and Islamic philosophical traditions more generally.[53] Returning to the issue of what to call the individual in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears, then, it is possible that al-Jīlī's injunction to call the Muhammadan Reality by the name of the form in which it appears (whether that be the form of Muhammad himself or the form of another individual) was designed to preserve the 'mystery' of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality from the uninitiated. By continuing to call al-Jabartī by his own name, for instance, al-Jīlī could preserve the mystery that the Muhammadan Reality had appeared within his *shaykh*, and thereby would not arouse the concern and suspicion of those who did not understand the mystery. Indeed, al-Jīlī gives an indication of the need to

be on one's guard in this respect when he acknowledges, at the end of the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, that the uninitiated might mistake his view on the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality with the heretical doctrine of the 'transmigration of souls' (*al-tanāsukh*):

> Take care not to imagine (*tatawahham*) that there is any hint in what I say of the doctrine of transmigration of souls (*madhhab al-tanāsukh*). God forbid, and may the Messenger of God forbid, that that be my intention. Rather, the Messenger of God – May God bless him and grant him peace – has the ability to take on every form (*al-taṣawwar bi-kull ṣūrah*), with the result that he becomes manifest (*yatajallá*) within that form. And it became his custom (*sunnah*) to go on taking on the form of the most perfect person (*bi-ṣūrat akmalihim*) of the age, so as to elevate their station and establish affection for them, and they are his viceregents (*khulafā'*) in the outer realm (*fī al-ẓāhir*), while he is their reality (*ḥaqīqah*) in the inner realm (*fī al-bāṭin*).[54]

In medieval Islamic doxographical and heresiographical literature, *tanāsukh* is a false doctrine associated with a variety of supposedly misguided religious groups, including 'extremist' (*ghulāt*) Shi'ah, Mazdakites, Hindus, and Buddhists. Thus al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) informs the reader of his famous work of doxography *Kitāb al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*:

> Abū Kāmil [the eponym of an 'extremist' Shi'i sect called the 'Kāmiliyyah'] … said that the Imamate was a light that transmigrates (*yatanāsakh*) from one individual to another, and that that light was prophethood (*nubuwwah*) in one individual and the Imamate in another, and that the Imamate could transmigrate and become prophethood. And he said that spirits transmigrate at the time of death. All of the extremist Shi'ah (*al-ghulāt*), in their different groups, agree upon transmigration of the soul [of the Imām] (*al-tanāsukh*) and the indwelling [of God in the Imām] (*al-ḥulūl*). Indeed, transmigration of souls was the doctrine (*maqālah*) of a sect (*firqah*) in every community (*fī kull ummah*), who received it from the Mazakite Zoroastrians and the Brahmin Indians, and from the philosophers and the Sabians.[55]

Al-Jīlī would have been understandably concerned to avoid any possible association of his position with the doctrines of these heretical and infidel religious groups, especially given the aforementioned parallels between aspects of his idea of the Perfect Human and Shi'i conceptions of the Imamate. This might then be one reason for his injunction to avoid calling the Muhammadan Reality who appears in the form of other individuals by the name of Muhammad.

The other possible explanation for al-Jīlī's interest in what to call the manifested Muhammadan Reality brings us to the third important point to consider in relation to the passage under discussion, namely, al-Jīlī's emphasis on the need to conduct oneself in the proper manner (*adab*) with the person in whom the Muhammadan Reality is manifest.[56] Naming the Muhammadan Reality correctly,

in other words, could be simply be a matter of good conduct. In this regard, al-Jīlī stresses that, when dealing with the individual in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears, one should behave just as one would behave when dealing with the Prophet Muhammad himself: "You must conduct yourself (*tata'addab*) with the bearer of that form in the way that you would conduct yourself with Muhammad." This is significant, because it indicates that in al-Jīlī's view the individual in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears actually *becomes* Muhammad, or, perhaps, he becomes them. I do not believe that we find this idea, expressed in so explicit a manner, in the earlier Ibn 'Arabian tradition.[57] Moreover, if, as suggested above, al-Jīlī believes the Muhammadan Reality to be in some sense identical with the divine essence, then the necessity for *adab* would be even more important, since in interacting with the Muhammadan Reality one would, in a sense, be interacting with God Himself.

This leads on to the final and perhaps most important point to consider when reading al-Jīlī's treatment of the Muhammadan Reality, namely, the language that he uses to describe the Muhammadan Reality's appearance within individuals. Two key terms are particularly important here. On several occasions al-Jīlī tells us that the Muhammadan Reality 'takes on the form' (*yataṣawwar*) of the individual in whom he appears. Alternatively, he uses the language of 'manifestation': the Muhammadan Reality 'becomes manifest' (*yatajallá*) within individuals. The latter term, in particular, is familiar to us, for *tajallī* (as noted in Chapter 2 of this book) is the most common Ibn 'Arabian term for describing the 'manifestation' of the divine within creation. In using the term of the Muhammadan Reality, therefore, al-Jīlī creates an association in the reader's mind between the Muhammadan Reality and God. The same, moreover, can be said of his use of *taṣawwur*. Towards the beginning of the first chapter of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, which as we have seen is devoted to the divine essence (*al-dhāt*), for instance, al-Jīlī writes:

> Know that the essence of God – Glory be to Him and may He be exalted – is an expression of His self (*'ibārah 'an nafsihi*), through which He is existent, because He is established through His self. This is what deserves the names and attributes, through His ipseity (*huwiyyah*). So *it takes on form of every form* (*fa-yataṣawwar bi-kull ṣūrah*) whose inner meaning (*ma'ná*) requires it.[58]

Again, therefore, when al-Jīlī refers in chapter 60 to how the Muhammadan Reality "has the ability to take on every form (*al-taṣawwar bi-kull ṣūrah*)", the attentive reader will draw an association between the Muhammadan Reality and God – indeed, in this instance, the divine essence itself. This passage can therefore be added to those other instances in *al-Insān al-kāmil* where al-Jīlī appears to blur the distinction between the divine essence and the Muhammadan Reality. In this regard, it seems justifiable to conclude that al-Jīlī takes the idea of the Muhammadan Reality to a level that was unprecedented in the history of Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysical thought.

Notes

1 Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, 177.
2 See Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light".
3 For the synonymy of these three terms in Ibn ʻArabī's thought, see al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 347–349.
4 See Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 42–47. These mystics may themselves have drawn upon Shiʻi ideas. See ibid., 52, note 18; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʻism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, tr. D. Streight (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 29–60.
5 See Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 164–169; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 27–32, 53–54, 65, 116–118; B. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʻArabī and the Sufis* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014), 53–62, 85–90. Note also the appearance of this idea in the *tafsīr* attributed to the sixth Shīʻī Imām Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), quoted in Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 65.
6 Quoted in Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 42.
7 See ibid.
8 See ʻAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 75.
9 See e.g. Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 214; Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:141–142; Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 73; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 236; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 50.
10 See e.g. al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 29; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 237; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 63. According to Jonathan Brown, the authenticity of this hadith was rejected by medieval hadith collectors, "even those … known for their laxity. Belief in [their] truth persisted, however, especially among Sufi scholars", Brown, *Misquoting*, 228.
11 See Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 68, note 28.
12 See ʻAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 68; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 237–238; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 155, 206. Ebstein highlights the affinity of this notion with the Ismaili Neoplatonic conception of the First Intellect, for which see also M. Hodgson, *The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizârî Ismâʻîlîs Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1955), 16–17.
13 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:119; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 348–349.
14 See ʻAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 72–74. The idea that the prophets (and Friends of God) draw upon the light of Muhammad is also found in *Khalʻ al-naʻlayn* of the Algarvian mystic and rebel leader Ibn Qasī, a work on which Ibn ʻArabī wrote a commentary. See Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?" 219.
15 Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 63–64. See also ibid., 62:

> This knowledge (*ʻilm*) is only for the Seal of Messengers (*khātim al-rusul*) and the Seal of the Friends of God (*khātim al-awliyāʼ*), and none of the prophets and messengers knows it, except from the lamp (*mishkāt*) of the Messenger who is the Seal.

Ibn ʻArabī, *Kitāb Manzil al-quṭb*, in *Rasāʼil*, 2:6: "Every [Pole] is in the lamp (*mishkāt*) of Muhammad – Peace be upon him – who is that which encompasses everything (*al-amr al-jāmiʻ li-al-kull*)."
16 Chittick, "Chapter Headings", 86.
17 Al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 29.
18 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 266. For an alternative translation, see Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 237. See similarly al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah*, 457: "the Muhammadan Reality is the form of the all-comprehensive divine name (*ṣūrat al-ism al-jāmiʻ al-ilāhī*) and its lord, and from it [occurs] [His] emanation (*fayḍ*) and extension (*al-istimdād*) over all the other names"; Jāmī, *Sharḥ*, 57.
19 For this verse from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tāʼiyyah*, see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 67.
20 ʻIrāqī, *Lamaʻāt*, in *Kulliyāt-i Fakhruddīn-iʻIrāqī*, ed. S. Nafīsī (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʼī, 1338 SH [=1956/1957]), 375.
21 Al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 39–40.

22 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddamah*, 490.
23 See Nicholson, *Studies*, 87, 104ff.; A. Jeffrey, "Ibn ʿArabī's *Shajarat al-kawn*", *Studia Islamica* 10 (1959), 43–77, 11 (1960), 113–160 (note that the attribution of this text to Ibn ʿArabī appears to be mistaken); ʿAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 66–101; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 236–238; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 64. There is also a parallel with the presentation of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs: "The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be" (Prov. 8:22–31) Indeed, "Philo had interpreted the pre-existence Wisdom spoken of in apocalyptic and rabbinic sources as the equivalent of the Logos", Altmann, "*Homo Imago Dei*", 245.
24 C. Lévy, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Philo of Alexandria".
25 See also 1 Cor. 8:6, where Paul writes, "and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live". Cf. Altmann, "*Homo Imago Dei*", 245–246. According to Martin Goodman, Paul "casts Christ's pre-existence, before incarnation as Jesus, in a role similar to Wisdom in earlier Jewish texts or the Logos in Philo". M. Goodman, *A History of Judaism* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 193.
26 Lévy, "Philo of Alexandria". See also Jeffrey, "Ibn ʿArabī's *Shajarat al-kawn*", 46. Cf. Goodman, *History of Judaism*, 175: "Sometimes Philo identified the Logos with the mind of God. At other times, the Logos was reckoned 'midway between man and God'."
27 This title can be explained by the fact that the Qur'anic exegetes gloss "the Trustworthy Spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) of the Qur'an (see Q 26:193) with the Angel Gabriel.
28 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 152–153.
29 For the pre-Islamic antecedents of this image and its association with the *quṭb*, see Jamil, "Caliph and *Quṭb*", 18–19, 30; Jamil, *Ethics and Poetry*, 332. For Ibn ʿArabī's use of the term, see Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 75, cited in Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 135.
30 Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 57–60.
31 See also al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 166: "It is the First Intellect connected to Muhammad from which God created Gabriel – Peace be upon him – in pre-eternity. So Muhammad was the father of Gabriel and the origin of the whole world."
32 See also ibid., 146:

> The Pen is the First Intellect, and they are both faces of the Muhammadan Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-Muhammadī*). He – peace and blessings be upon him – said, "The first thing that God created was the spirit of your prophet, O Jābir." So the Highest Pen, the First Intellect, and the Muhammadan Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-Muhammadī*) are an expression of a single essence (*jawhar fard*), which, in connection to creation is called the Highest Pen, in connection to creation's request [for existence] is called the First Intellect, and in its being added to the Perfect Human is called a Muhammadan Spirit.

The hadith that al-Jīlī cites here – which had earlier been cited in this context by Ibn ʿArabī and his interpreters – was widely believed to be a forgery by hadith scholars. See Gomaa, *Responding*, 147.
33 See Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 66–67; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam*, 813, for full lists of names that Ibn ʿArabī uses as synonyms for the Muhammadan Reality. For al-Qūnawī's and al-Farghānī's use of these terms as synonyms, see Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 65, 67.
34 See Afīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 75, note 4, 177; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 69, note 20; Böwering and Casewit, *A Qur'an Commentary by Ibn Barrajān*, 42–43.
35 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:391; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 55. See also Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:396; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam*, 162.
36 See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 48.

37 Thus Tahānawī's entrance on "*al-dhāt*", for instance, is almost entirely devoted to the divine essence. See Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 816–818.
38 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 206. For the distinction between *al-wujūd al-muṭlaq* and *al-wujūd al-muqayyad/al-mumkin* in the Sufi metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī and his interpreters, see al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam*, 1133.
39 See Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 816–817, for the dominant Ashʿarī view that "His essence – May He be exalted – is distinguished from all other essences."
40 See ibid., 685.
41 See e.g. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 173, where al-Jīlī identifies Muhammad with the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*), which, according to his Sufi metaphysical conception of the scriptures, is "an expression of the quiddity of the true nature of the essence" (*māhiyat kunh al-dhāt*), i.e. of the hidden divine essence itself; Lo Polito, *ʿAbd al-Karīm*, 159/208, for the passage in *al-Kahf wa-al-raqīm* where al-Jīlī recounts his vision that the Prophet was both qualified by the attributes of the divine self and was "the unseen essence itself" (*ʿayn al-dhāt al-ghāʾib*).
42 See, for instance, his definition of *al-ʿaql al-awwal* in chapter 53:

> The First Intellect [the edition I am using mistakenly reads '*al-fiʿl al-awwal*' here] is a light of divine knowledge (*nūr ʿilm ilāhī*) which appeared in the first of His created, entifying descents (*awwal tanazzulātihi al-taʿyīniyyah al-khalqiyyah*), or if you wish you could say that it is the first specification of the divine comprehensiveness (*awwal tafṣīl al-ijmāl al-ilāhī*).
>
> (Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 164)

See also al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt*, 325: "And He called him [namely, Muhammad] the First Intellect, because he was the first thing that was 'intellected'."
43 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210–211.
44 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, 536. For the whole entry on al-Shiblī, see ibid., 536–557.
45 Ibid., 647.
46 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 126.
47 Al-Zabīdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 101.
48 These individuals, it should be noted, are 'viceregents' in the sense of being what al-Jīlī calls in the aforementioned passage from the chapter on the Psalms "the greater viceregents" (*al-khulafāʾ al-kubrá*), that is, viceregents not in the political sense of 'caliphs', but rather the elite 'Friends of God' – i.e. the Poles and the 'Unique Ones'. See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 126.
49 See also ibid., 265, where al-Jīlī both refers to the Perfect Ones as "viceregents of Muhammad" (*khulafāʾ Muḥammad*) and to how they "deputise for Muhammad" (*nāba ʿan Muḥammad*).
50 Ibn ʿArabī, it should be noted, encourages the reader of the *Futūḥāt* to try to "see the Real in the Muhammadan form (*al-ṣūrah al-muḥammadiyyah*), through the Muhammadan vision (*al-ruʾyah al-muḥammadiyyah*), rather than [to] see Him in your form", Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 4:433; Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam*, 500.
51 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 157. See also ibid., 260, where, having alluded to the esoteric "mysteries" (*asrār*), "wisdom" (*ḥikmah*), and "allusions" (*ishārāt*) contained in Jewish rituals, he declares,

> We are afraid that many of the ignorant (*al-juhhāl*) will be seduced (*yaghtarrū*) by this and so leave their religion (*fa-yakhrijū ʿan dīnihim*) due to their lack of knowledge of its mysteries. So let us desist from revealing the mysteries of the forms of worship of the People of the Book (*iẓhār asrār taʿabbudāt ahl al-kitāb*).

52 See e.g. al-Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz*, 11:

> At this station [namely, the station of Muhammad] there are mysteries (*asrār*) that have been covered up (*sutirat*) by affirmation and denial, and which have been

affirmed [only] at their level, out of fear of revealing them (*iẓhārihā*) at an improper time, and prior to the [reader's] attainment of their level. Had it been permissible to divulge them (*ifshā'uhā*), they would have been revealed to you, and their signs would have been recited to you, but this is the mystery of His statement: "to make clear to people what has been sent down to them", (Q 16:44) and He did not say, "what has been sent down to you", nor "all that has been sent down upon you", and [it is the mystery of] other divine allusive sayings and pieces of wisdom: that He forbade (*mana'a*) the direct disclosure (*al-taṣrīḥ*) of what was there. So it is necessary to take into account the divine indication (*al-tanbīh al-ilāhī*), and to stop at that.

53 See G. Hourani (tr.), *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012), 32–36, 114, note 191; Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:325; Brown, *Misquoting*, 222–223; Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 167–168, 368–372.

54 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 211.

55 Al-Shahrastānī, *Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects: part 2, Containing the Account of Philosophical Sects*, ed. W. Cureton (London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1842), 133.

56 In a similar context in his *Qāb al-qawsayn*, al-Jīlī likewise makes a reference to the associated concept of *futuwwah*, 'chivalry'. See Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger", 358. For Ibn 'Arabī's conception of *adab*, see D. Gril, "*Adab* and Revelation, or, One of the Foundations of the Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabi", in *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan (Shaftsbury, UK: Element for the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, 1993), 228–263.

57 This conclusion, it should be noted, is in keeping with Valerie Hoffman's finding that al-Jīlī's writings – particularly his *Qāb al-qawsayn* and *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah* – constitute an early instance of the appearance of the Sufi idea of 'annihilation in the Messenger' (*al-fanā' fī al-rasūl*), an idea which essentially denotes the mystic becoming a locus of manifestation for the Muhammadan Reality, and which subsequently became an important feature of early modern Sufism. See Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger".

58 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 26 (my emphasis).

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6 The identity of the Perfect Human

Ibn ‘Arabian Antecedents

Who is the Perfect Human? Or perhaps that should be: Who are the Perfect Humans? Though we have touched upon this question in our discussion of the Pole and the Muhammadan Reality, let us now look at it in greater detail. There are, I think, three possible ways of reading Ibn ‘Arabī and his leading interpreters’ treatment of the identity of the Perfect Human, namely:

1 All human beings are (potentially) perfect, or, rather, humanity in general is perfect.
2 The Perfect Humans are all of the prophets and/or the Friends of God.
3 The Perfect Human is Muhammad.

Let us deal with each of these possibilities in turn.

The perfection of humanity in general

It was noted above that the classic statement of Ibn ‘Arabī’s idea of the Perfect Human is the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which is devoted to Adam. Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabī only uses the term ‘*al-insān al-kāmil*’ on seven occasions in the entire *Fuṣūṣ*. Of these seven instances of the term, three of these occur in the chapter on Adam, and a fourth also refers to Adam.[1] In chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt*, meanwhile, after quoting the *homo imago dei* hadith Ibn ‘Arabī tells us that Adam is “the Perfect Human, the summary (*mukhtaṣar*) who manifests all the realities of the universe, both originated and eternal”.[2] From this we might reasonably conclude that, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, Adam is the archetypal Perfect Human.

The significance of this is that ‘Adam’, in Ibn ‘Arabian thought and in the wider Islamic tradition, stands not only for the prophet of that name, but also for mankind as a whole, in his capacity as ‘*abū al-bashar*’, the ‘Father of Humanity’.[3] When Ibn ‘Arabī uses the term ‘Perfect Human’ of Adam, therefore, it might well be interpreted to refer to the perfection of humanity in general.

Indeed, this interpretation is supported by what Ibn ʻArabī himself writes in his epitome of the *Fuṣūṣ*, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*:

> Know that the most beautiful divine names require, due to their essences, the existence of the world. So God gave existence to the world as a body (*jasadan*) given shape, and made Adam its spirit. And by ʻAdam' I mean the existence of the human world (*al-ʻālam al-insānī*).[4]

By glossing ʻAdam' as the "the human world", Ibn ʻArabī seems to be suggesting that it is not only Adam who is the microcosm and Perfect Human, but, rather, humanity as a whole.[5] This interpretation was taken on by Ibn ʻArabī's leading commentators. Thus al-Qūnawī, in his summary of the chapters of the *Fuṣūṣ*, informs us: "The Wisdom of Divinity or of the divine Name Allah was singled out for Adam because mankind was created to be God's Viceregent (*khalîfah*); as such, his ontological level comprehends and synthesizes all the ontological levels of the 'world'."[6] Just as for Ibn ʻArabī it is mankind in general who is to be viewed as the microcosm, therefore, so here for al-Qūnawī it is mankind in general who is to be viewed as God's Viceregent and the 'synthetic being'. Al-Qāshānī is even more explicit. At the beginning of his commentary on the chapter on Adam in the *Fuṣūṣ*, and citing the passage from Ibn ʻArabī's *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* quoted above, he writes:

> Since this "gemstone" (*faṣṣ*) [i.e. chapter] denotes humankind (*nawʻ al-insān*) and its reality, which is called "Adam" – for as [Ibn ʻArabī] said in *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, "And I mean by 'Adam' the existence of the human world (*wujūd al-ʻālam al-insānī*), since the world is like a treasure and mankind is like its gemstone." – the heart of every human being (*kull insān*) who knows God and is perfect (*kāmil*) is a gemstone.[7]

Meanwhile al-Qayṣarī, in chapter five of his *Muqaddimah*, which is devoted to the five 'presences', writes in the context of his discussion of how the Perfect Man is a comprehensive synthesis of all of the presences:

> Since every individual in the world (*kull fard min afrād al-ʻālam*) is a sign (*ʻalāmah*) of the divine name, and of every name … every individual in the world is also a world (*ʻālam*) through which is known all of the [divine] names.[8]

Evidently, therefore, there is strong textual basis for the idea that the title of 'Perfect Human', in the Ibn ʻArabian tradition, applies to humanity in general, which is to say that mankind in its original state is perfect.

Moreover, if this is the correct interpretation of the identity of the Perfect Human, then it would appear that this applies to both men *and women*. Ibn ʻArabī, who is well known for having several women among his early teachers and later among his disciples,[9] states this explicitly in chapter 324 of the *Futūḥāt*, which is devoted to 'Knowing the locus of synthesis (*manzil jamʻ*)

between women and men at some of the divine waystations (*al-mawāṭin al-ilāhiyyah*)': "These are all states (*aḥwāl*) that men and women share (*yashtarik*) in, and they share in all of the levels (*al-marātib*), even that of the Pole (*al-quṭbiyyah*)."[10] Likewise, in his discussion of the number of 'Substitutes' (*abdāl*) – a term referring to members of the hierarchy of 'Friends of God' who support the Pole, so-called because when one dies another takes his place[11] – in the same work, he writes:

> It was asked of one of them, "How many Substitutes are there?" And he said, "Forty souls." And it was asked of him, "Why do you not say forty men (*arba'īn rajulan*)?" And he said, "[Because] there may be women (*al-nisā'*) among them."[12]

At the beginning of chapter 64 of the *Futūḥāt*, meanwhile, Ibn 'Arabī states that "a woman might attain (*qad tablugh*), with respect to perfection (*al-kamāl*), the degree of men, and a man might descend (*qad tanzil*), with respect to imperfection (*al-naqṣ*), to lower than the degree of imperfection possessed by a woman".[13] To take a final example, in the chapter on Muhammad in the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī declares that man's "witnessing (*shuhūd*) of the Real in woman is more complete and more perfect (*atamm wa-akmal*)",[14] than his witnessing of God in himself, suggesting perhaps that women are naturally disposed to serving as a perfect locus of divine manifestation, which, after all, is the definition of the Perfect Human.

This being said, it should not be imagined that the Ibn 'Arabian Sufis held to the idea of the equality of the sexes in the modern sense. Thus Ibn 'Arabī, for instance, associates maleness with 'activity' (*fi'liyyah*) and femaleness with 'passivity' (*infi'āliyyah*), on account of the fact that women are the 'locus of creation' (*maḥall al-takwīn*) of human beings, and, echoing the Biblical tradition (see Gen. 2:21–22) that Eve was created from the rib of Adam, identifies women as being a 'part' of (*juz' min*) man.[15] This is spelled out in fairly clear terms by al-Qāshānī in the context of his discussion of the passage from the chapter on Muhammad in the *Fuṣūṣ* where Ibn 'Arabī discusses the idea – expressed in a hadith – that women were among the three things that the Prophet loved in this world:

> Know that the woman is the form of the soul (*ṣūrat al-nafs*), and the man is the form of the spirit (*ṣūrat al-rūḥ*), so just as the soul is a part of (*juz' min*) the spirit, such that the entification of the soul (*al-ta'ayyun al-nafsī*) is one of the entifications beneath the entification of the spirit (*al-ta'ayyun al-rūḥī*), which is first and which is the true Adam and one of his "descents" (*tanazzul min tanazzulātihi*), so too is the woman, in reality, a part of the man. And every part is a guide to (*dalīl 'alá*) its origin (*aṣl*). So the woman is a guide to the man, and man is a guide to her. He [Muhammad] said, "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord." So the guide comes before that to which it guides (*al-madlūl*), and for that reason women are brought forward [in the hadith under discussion].[16]

Similarly, in the passage from chapter 64 of the *Futūḥāt* cited above, Ibn ʻArabī goes on to tell the reader that, while

> the precepts concerning acts of worship (*ʻibādāt*) might be the same [for men and women] or they might differ, nevertheless the most common (*al-ghālib*) [situation] is the superiority of a man's intellect over the intellect of a woman (*faḍl ʻaql al-rajul ʻalá ʻaql al-marʼah*), because he was endowed with an intellect from God before woman was, since he preceded her in existence.[17]

Likewise in the aforementioned chapter 324 he explains that

> women are of lesser intellect than men (*al-nisāʼ nāqiṣāt al-ʻaql ʻan al-rijāl*) … and their preparedness (*istiʻdād*) is less than (*yanquṣ ʻan*) the preparedness of men, because they are a part of them, so the woman must be described as being less in religion (*nuqṣān al-dīn*) than the man.[18]

The root *n-q-ṣ* that is repeatedly used here, it should be noted, denotes the opposite of *k-m-l*, the root signifying perfection. It seems clear, therefore, that Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters assigned to men and women different origins, different ranks in the metaphysical hierarchy, and different intellectual capacities. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this did not necessarily preclude the possibility of women attaining the status of Pole or Perfect Human.[19]

While we have seen some evidence in support of the idea that the title 'Perfect Human' can be applied to humanity in general, I do not think this should be taken to mean that Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters thought that all people were Perfect Humans. Rather, the 'perfection' of humanity in general should be taken to mean that, as Shahab Ahmed has put it, "While very, very few human beings are the completely perfect human, all human beings are potentially *perfectable* or *complete-able*."[20] Al-Qūnawī in fact tells us something similar in his unfinished commentary on a collection of 40 hadith:

> Know that the facet whereby things are directly connected to the True is indeed present in all beings, but that most people are unaware of it, such that there never opens for them that door through which one takes from God without any intermediary.[21]

To understand this point, we have to refer to an important concept in Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysics, namely the idea of 'preparedness' (*istiʻdād*) or 'receptivity' (*qābiliyyah*), terms that were mentioned in the passage quote just above. These concepts denote the idea that each individual existent has a particular capacity to act as a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes.[22] From this it follows that there is a hierarchy of existents – and of human beings – according to the criterion of 'preparedness'. As Ibn ʻArabī puts it in chapter 57 of the *Futūḥāt*:

> It says [in Q 17:20][23] that God gives continuously, while the loci [of His manifestation] (*maḥāll*) receive (*taqbal*) [the divine manifestation] according to the realities of their preparednesses (*ḥaqā'iq isti'dādātihā*), just as we say that the lights from the sun are spread over the existents, and that [the sun] does not hold back its light from anything. The loci receive that light according to their preparedness.[24]

Some individuals, in other words, are more prepared to receive the divine manifestation than others, and hence are more perfect than others.[25] At the top of this hierarchy of perfection stand the Perfect Humans. On several occasions in his writings, Ibn 'Arabī expresses the distinction between the Perfect Humans and the rest of humanity in terms of the difference between 'the Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and 'the animal human' (*al-insān al-ḥayawān/al-ḥayawānī*).[26] Simply put, while the Perfect Human, as we have seen, is defined as the individual who is a 'synthetic being' – that is, who unites the created and the divine within himself – the 'animal human' manifests only the created aspect of humanity. As Ibn 'Arabī tells us in the *Futūḥāt*:

> The animal human (*al-insān al-ḥayawān*) is the viceregent (*khalīfah*) of the Perfect Human. He is the outer form through which the realities of the world were synthesised, while the Perfect Human is the one who added to his synthesis of all the realities of the world the realities of the Real, through which the viceregency [of God] became valid for him.[27]

In one sense, therefore, the distinction between the Perfect Human and the animal one is a fairly stark one. Ibn 'Arabī makes this clear in another passage of the *Futūḥāt*:

> So the outer aspect of the human being is created (*khalq*), and the inner aspect is Real (*ḥaqq*), which is the Perfect Human, the goal [of creation]. All [humans] other than him are the animal human (*al-insān al-ḥayawānī*), and the rank of the animal human with respect to the Perfect Human is the rank of the half-human monster (*al-nisnās*) with respect to the animal human.[28]

At the same time, however, we should probably think of the difference between the Perfect Human and the animal human more in terms of a sliding scale than a rigid dichotomy. Human beings, Ibn 'Arabī tells us, were all created for perfection,[29] only they manifest this perfection to varying degrees. Furthermore, in a passage from the chapter on Moses in the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn 'Arabī appears to suggest that the difference between the Perfect Human and the animal human lies in their *awareness* of their original perfection:

> So He brought into existence within this noble summary (*al-mukhtaṣar al-sharīf*), who is the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), all of the divine names and the realities of that which emerged from Him in the separated

> macrocosm. And He made him a spirit for the world, and subjugated (*sakhkhara*) for him the high and the low, due to the perfection (*kamāl*) of his form … So all that is in the world is beneath the subjugation (*taskhīr*) of man. He – meaning, the Perfect Human – knew this, due to his knowledge (*min ʿilmihi*), while the animal human (*al-insān al-ḥayawān*) was ignorant (*jahala*) of that, due to his ignorance (*min jahlihi*).[30]

It can therefore be concluded that, for Ibn ʿArabī, humanity in general is originally perfect, yet humans differ in the degree of their perfection according to the extent to which they manifest the divine names and attributes and recognise their status as loci of the divine manifestation.

All of the prophets and/or Friends of God

Perhaps the best evidence for the idea that it is the prophets who are the true Perfect Humans in Ibn ʿArabī's thought is the *Fuṣūṣ* as a whole. The overarching idea of that work is that the 'word' or *logos* (*kalimah*) of each of the 27 prophets to whom a chapter is devoted represents a different type of divine wisdom (*ḥikmah*), e.g. the wisdom of divinity (*ilāhiyyah*) in the case of Adam, transcendence (*ʿalawiyyah*) in the case of Moses, and singularity (*fardiyyah*) in the case of Muhammad.[31] In this sense, therefore, they can be deemed Perfect Humans by virtue of their manifestation of the divine attributes.[32] Al-Qāshānī seems to suggest this towards the opening of his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> Every prophet (*nabīy*) has a level (*martabah*) of perfection, which is all the forms of knowledge and wisdom united in the unqualified oneness of the divine name that is his Lord. For this reason the gemstone (*faṣṣ*) on his heart, which is the locus of his wisdom, was transferred to the gemstone that comprehends that form of wisdom, and he was called by its name, due to the reciprocal relationship (*al-munāsabah*) between them.[33]

Similarly, al-Qāshānī informs us later in his commentary that "all of the prophets are forms of the spiritual, luminous divine realities" (*ṣuwar al-ḥaqāʾiq al-ilāhiyyah al-nūrāniyyah al-rūḥāniyyah*),[34] and that they all possess "the universal entifications" (*al-taʿayyunāt al-kulliyyah*),[35] phrases which indicate that all of the prophets synthesise the divine names and attributes and the levels of existence, and hence are all Perfect Humans. This being said, it is notable that al-Qāshānī tells us in the above-quoted passage that each prophet has a "level" of perfection. This seems to be an indication that there is a hierarchy of perfection among the prophets, which, we can assume, is determined by the particular forms of 'wisdom' that are associated with them (the forms of wisdom associated with Adam and Muhammad, for instance, being superior to those associated with the other prophets). In fact, al-Qāshānī spells this out more clearly in his commentary on the chapter on the prophet ʿUzayr:

> Nevertheless, they [namely, the prophets] differ (*mukhtalifūn*) with respect to the human entifications, due to the difference in the divine names that are within them. And that is due to the difference in their receptivities (*qawābil*), in accordance with their human temperaments and equilibriums (*al-amzijah wa-al-i'tidālāt al-insāniyyah*).[36]

This diversity among the prophets leaves us wondering whether all of the prophets are in fact Perfect Humans in the fullest sense. Nevertheless, it is true that, as we have seen, Ibn 'Arabī assigns to certain prophets spiritual stations (i.e. the station of the Pole, the two 'Imams', etc.) that are connected to the station of the Perfect Human. Equally, however, we also saw that he also assigns the same station – albeit in a less comprehensive sense – to certain other individuals, such as the Rāshidūn caliphs and the Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, suggesting that individuals who are not ordinarily considered prophets are also capable of becoming Perfect Humans. There are two possible conclusions to draw from this: either the status of Perfect Human is not limited to the prophets, or we have to reconsider our understanding of who and what a 'prophet' is.

Significantly, and in something of a radical break with the wider Sunni tradition,[37] Ibn 'Arabī in fact seems to opt for the second option. He does this by developing a distinction between two types of prophethood. On the one hand, he writes of a 'specific' or 'legislative' type of prophethood (*nubuwwah khāṣṣah*/*al-tashrī'*). This is the form of prophethood that involves the prophet receiving and propagating a new religious law (*sharī'ah*). In this sense, it is identical to what is usually known in the wider Islamic tradition as 'messengerhood' (*al-risālah*). Like with the orthodox Islamic conception of *risālah*, Ibn 'Arabī declares that this form of prophethood came to an end with the death of Muhammad, 'The Seal of Prophets' (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*) (see Q 33:40). On the other hand, however, there is what he calls 'general prophethood' (*nubuwwah 'āmmah*). This form of prophethood involves not the receipt of a new religious law, but rather unmediated communication with God. In this sense it is identical to what Ibn 'Arabī calls *walāyah*. Significantly, in Ibn 'Arabī's view this form of 'prophethood' continues after the death of Muhammad and is in fact superior to legislative prophethood – albeit that the legislative prophets are superior to the other prophets by virtue of the fact that they possess *both* kinds of prophethood.[38] Ibn 'Arabī states most of this in clear terms in a passage in the *Futūḥāt*, when he writes of

> the great servants of God (*al-akābir min 'ibād Allāh*), who are, in our time, at the rank of the prophets in the time of prophethood. This is general prophethood (*al-nubuwwah al-'āmmah*), for the prophethood that was cut off (*inqaṭa'at*) with the existence of the Messenger of God – May God bless him and grant him peace – was only legislative prophethood (*nubuwwat al-tashrī'*).[39]

It is fair to say that this whole idea constitutes a radical break with the orthodox Islamic notion of the 'sealing of prophethood'.

This Ibn ‘Arabian distinction between specific or legislative and general prophethood has important implications for our understanding of the identity of the Perfect Humans, for it means that, if perfection is a quality of the prophets, then ‘general’ as well as ‘specific’ prophets are capable of being Perfect Humans. It is therefore possible for Ibn ‘Arabī and his interpreters to suggest both that it is the prophets who are the Perfect Humans *and* that the Friends of God – including the elite Sufis of the post-Muhammadan age – are Perfect Humans, while still maintaining that perfection is the preserve of the prophets. Thus al-Qūnawī, for example, refers in his correspondence with the philosopher Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) to “the perfected, Perfect Ones (*al-kāmilīn al-mukammalīn*) from among [Muhammad’s] brethren and successors (*min ikhwānihi wa-warathatihi*)”,[40] as well as to how God “selects from among His creation in every age and from every generation a select group (*naqāwah*) within His creation, who are sometimes called prophets (*anbiyā’*) and sometimes perfect Friends of God (*awliyā’ kāmilīn*)”.[41] Similarly, al-Qayṣarī informs us in his aforementioned discussion of the identity of the Pole:

> After the cutting off of prophethood (*inqiṭā‘ al-nubuwwah*) – by which I mean legislative prophethood (*nubuwwat al-tashrī‘*) – and with the completion of its orbit and the appearance of divine friendship (*al-walāyah*) as its inner aspect, the station of the Pole was transferred to the Friends of God alone. So there remains one of them established at this station, so that this order and arrangement is preserved.[42]

Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentators appear to have considered Ibn ‘Arabī himself – who famously declared himself to be ‘The Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood’ (*khātam al-walāyah al-Muhammadiyyah*)[43] – to have been among the Perfect Humans of the post-Muhammadan age.[44] We therefore seem to have good evidence for the view that the Perfect Humans are to be identified with the ‘prophets’ in the sense of both the ‘legislative prophets’ – the ‘messengers’ of the wider Islamic tradition – and the ‘general’ prophets – the Friends of God or Sufi saints.

Muhammad as the Perfect Human

According to Toshihiko Izutsu, the author of a classic study of the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī and his interpreters, “All the prophets, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, are embodiments of the idea of the Perfect Man. But the Islamic Prophet, Muhammad, occupies among them a very special place.”[45] Prior to Ibn ‘Arabī, the perfection of Muhammad had already been set out in Sufi thought, as for instance by al-Ghazālī, who in his *Kīmīyā-yi sa‘ādat*, after setting out the three qualities (*khāṣṣiyat*) of the prophets and Friends of God, explains that “the perfection (*kamāl*) of our Messenger – May God bless him and grant him peace – was such that he had these three qualities to the utmost degree of perfection (*bi-ghāyat-i kamāl*)”.[46] What evidence is there, we might therefore ask, that Ibn ‘Arabī

viewed Muhammad as the one true Perfect Human, as Izutsu suggests? We have already come across some of the evidence in the chapters on the Pole and the Muhammadan Reality. We saw, for instance, Ibn ʻArabī identify "the one and only Pole" with "the spirit of Muhammad" (*rūḥ Muhammad*),[47] a view that was adopted by al-Qayṣarī. Similarly, we have seen that, for Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters, the Muhammadan Reality not only pre-existed the other prophets and Friends of God, but was also the source from which they drew their existence and their spiritual station; hence if it is true that it is the prophets and/or Friends of God who are the true Perfect Humans, then it follows that Muhammad, as the inner spirit or reality of those Perfect Humans,[48] possesses an even greater, all-encompassing kind of perfection.

This leads us on to one of the most important pieces of evidence for the idea that Muhammad is the true Perfect Human, namely the chapter on Muhammad in the *Fuṣūṣ*. The specific form of 'wisdom' that Ibn ʻArabī associates with Muhammad in the title of that chapter is 'uniqueness' or 'singularity' (*fardiyyah*). In his commentary on that chapter, al-Qayṣarī (to take a representative example) interprets Muhammad's 'uniqueness' in terms of his synthetic nature and him being a locus of manifestation for the divine names – the key qualities of the Perfect Human:

> Muhammad's wisdom is described by singularity [*fardiyyah*] because he was singled out for the station of Divine All-Comprehensiveness [*maqam al-jamʻ al-ilāhī*], beyond which is only the level of the Unique Essence. For He is the outward manifestation of the name Allah, the Greatest Name. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the Shaykh also called this Wisdom that of Universality [*kulliyyah*]: the Prophet comprehends all universals and particulars; no Name possesses any perfection not embraced by his perfection or any locus of manifestation not made outwardly manifest by His word.[49]

Such an interpretation of the meaning of Muhammad's 'singularity', it should be noted, can be justified with reference to Ibn ʻArabī's own work: in the chapter on Hūd in the *Fuṣūṣ* Ibn ʻArabī gives Muhammad the epithet of "the one who synthesises everything (*al-jāmiʻ li-al-kull*)".[50] At the beginning of that chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, moreover, Ibn ʻArabī explicitly connects Muhammad's uniqueness to his perfection; indeed, he describes the Prophet as "the *most perfect* existent in this human race" (*akmal mawjūd fī hādhā al-nawʻ al-insānī*), an idea which he links to the precedence of the Muhammadan Reality over the rest of creation.[51] Ibn ʻArabī uses similar language in the penultimate chapter (chapter 559) of the *Futūḥāt*, where he informs us:

> [T]he best (*afḍal*), the truest (*aʻdal*) and the straightest (*aqwam*) mirror [of God] is the mirror of Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace. The manifestation (*tajallī*) of the Real within it is more perfect (*akmal*) than every other form of manifestation that there is.[52]

This notion of Muhammad being the 'most perfect' human subsequently became an important motif in Ibn 'Arabian thought. Thus al-Farghānī, for example, refers to "the most-perfectness that was specific to the Muhammadan Reality" (*al-akmaliyyah al-mukhtaṣṣah bi-al-ḥaqīqah al-Muhammadiyyah*),[53] while al-Qāshānī similarly refers in his dictionary of Sufi technical terms to Muhammad "being specified by … most-perfectness (*ikhitṣāṣihi…bi-al-akmaliyyah*)".[54] In his commentary on the passage in question from the *Fuṣūṣ*, meanwhile – and foreshadowing his student al-Qayṣarī's interpretation of Muhammad's 'uniqueness' – al-Qāshānī links Muhammad being the most perfect human to him being a 'synthetic being':

> The Shaykh [namely, Ibn 'Arabī] gives as the reason for his [namely, Muhammad's] uniqueness (*fardiyyah*) his being the most perfect individual in the human race, because the most perfect (*al-akmal*) a synthesis (*jāmi'*) of [the number] one, the even, and the odd.[55]

It seems clear, then, that when Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters refer to Muhammad as the 'most perfect' human being, they mean to indicate his status as the true Perfect Human. At the same time, however, it is notable that Ibn 'Arabī does not use the term *al-insān al-kāmil* in the chapter on Muhammad – nor, I believe, do his commentators. And while Ibn 'Arabī repeatedly refers in the *Futūḥāt* to Muhammad as the "king" (*malik*) and "master" (*sayyid*) of mankind,[56] explains that the spirit of Muhammad "is extended to every Perfect Human",[57] and tells us, referencing the Qur'an and hadith, that Muhammad was given "the keys to the unseen" (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*) (see Q 6:59) and "the all-comprehensive words" (*jawāmi' al-kalim*),[58] he does not, to my knowledge, call him the Perfect Human outright. This is a point where al-Jīlī diverges from Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators from the Qūnawī tradition, as we shall now see.

Al-Jīlī's position

All three of the earlier Ibn 'Arabian perspectives on the identity of the Perfect Human can be found in al-Jīlī's writings. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that al-Jīlī's position on the identity of the Perfect Human is much less ambiguous than that of his Ibn 'Arabian predecessors. Again, the key text to take into consideration in this context comes from chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*. The title of that chapter – 'On the Perfect Human, and the fact that he is Muhammad, and the fact that he is a receptacle for the Real and creation' – gives the reader a clear indication that the one true Perfect Human, as he sees it, is Muhammad. Nevertheless, al-Jīlī begins the chapter with a discussion of the nature of humanity in general:

> Each one of the individuals of this human race (*afrād hādha al-naw' al-insānī*) is a copy (*nuskhah*) of the other in their perfection (*kamālihi*).

> There is not a single thing that is absent from one of them but present in another, save for that which is accidental (*bi-ḥasb al-ʻāriḍ*), like someone whose hands and legs have been cut off, or someone who has been created blind due to something that occurred accidentally (*ʻaraḍa*) in the stomach of his mother. But whenever something accidental does not occur, they [namely, any two humans] are like two mirrors facing one another: in each of them is found that which is found in the other. However, within [humanity] there are those in whom things exist potentially (*bi-al-quwwah*), and those in whom things exist in actuality (*bi-al-fiʻl*), who are the Perfect Ones (*al-kummal*) among the Prophets and Friends of God.[59]

Al-Jīlī attempts here to resolve the tension in Ibn ʻArabian thought between the idea that humanity as a whole is perfect and the idea that there are certain individuals who are Perfect Humans in the true sense. He does so by resorting to two important concepts from philosophical-theological thought: the 'accident' (*al-ʻāriḍ*/*ʻaraḍ*), and the Aristotelian distinction between 'potentiality' (*al-quwwah*) and 'actuality' (*al-fiʻl*). Most basically, an accident is something that a thing is qualified by, but which is not essential to that thing. Thus Ibn Sīnā defines *ʻāriḍ* as "that which a thing has been described by, but which the thing need not always be described by (*huwa al-ladhī qad wuṣifa bihi al-shay' illā annahu laysa yajib an yuwṣaf bihi al-shay' dā'iman*)".[60] To use one of the examples given by al-Jīlī here, while attributes such as life or rationality might be essential attributes of a human being – which is to say that if one did not have them one would not be a human being – blindness is an accidental attribute – one cannot be blind and still be a human being. The significance of this is that al-Jīlī appears to be indicating here that human beings' imperfections are only accidental, and that their essential nature is perfect. (In this regard, it should be noted that, unlike Ibn ʻArabī, al-Jīlī makes no reference to gender in his discussion of the essential perfection of humanity.)

This is further clarified by al-Jīlī's use of the distinction between potentiality and actuality. While all human beings are potentially (*bi-al-quwwah*) qualified by perfection, al-Jīlī tells us, only certain individuals possess that potential in actuality (*bi-al-fiʻl*).[61] While mankind, therefore, is essentially perfect, only those who are able to manifest that essential perfection are worthy of being called 'the Perfect Ones' (*al-kummal*), that is, the Perfect Humans.[62] These special individuals, al-Jīlī informs us here, are (among) the prophets and Friends of God. By utilising the philosophical distinction between potentiality and actuality, therefore, al-Jīlī is able to preserve both the Ibn ʻArabian position that humanity in general – represented by Adam, 'the Father of Humanity' – is perfect, and the Ibn ʻArabian position that the prophets and Friends of God are the true Perfect Humans, without sacrificing the internal consistency of his conception.[63]

While al-Jīlī indicates at the end of the passage quoted above that it is the prophets and Friends of God who are the Perfect Humans, this does not

necessarily mean that they are all alike in their perfection. Indeed, al-Jīlī proceeds to make it clear that they are *not* equally perfect:

> Subsequently, they [namely, 'the Perfect Ones'] differ (*mutafāwitūn*) in their perfection. For among them there is the perfect (*al-kāmil*) and the more/most perfect (*al-akmal*). None of them was specified (*yata'ayyan*) with what Muhammad was specified with in this existence, in terms of the perfection that was apportioned to him in his being made unique (*infirādihi*). His morals (*akhlāq*), spiritual states (*aḥwāl*), actions (*af'āl*), and some of his sayings (*aqwāl*) testify to this on his behalf. So he is the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), and the remainder of the prophets and Friends of God and the Perfect Ones are attached (*mulḥaqūn*) to him in the way that the perfect is attached to the more perfect, and are connected (*muntasabūn*) to him in the way that the good is connected to the better. But wherever the term "Perfect Human" in an unqualified sense (*muṭlaqan*) occurs in my writings, I only mean by it Muhammad, out of propriety for his most exalted station (*maqāmihi al-a'lá*) and his most resplendent, most perfect locus (*maḥallihi al-akmal al-asná*). And in this naming of him I have allusions and indications (*ishārāt wa-tanbīhāt*) to the unqualified station of the Perfect Human. It is impermissible to assign those allusions, or to ascribe those acts of worship (*'ibādāt*), to any other than the name "Muhammad" – May God bless him and grant him peace. For he is the Perfect Man by unanimous agreement (*bi-al-ittifāq*), and none of the Perfect Ones have the character (*al-khulq*) or morals (*al-akhlāq*) that he had.[64]

While the earlier Ibn 'Arabian Sufis had labelled Muhammad the 'most perfect' being and given some hints to the effect that he was the true Perfect Human, here al-Jīlī spells it out in no uncertain terms. Indeed, he is probably the first to be so explicit in identifying Muhammad as the Perfect Human. Moreover, it should be stressed that this passage is by no means the only instance in his writings where al-Jīlī emphasises that Muhammad is the one true Perfect Human. We have already seen, for instance, that he identifies the 'original name' of the Pole as Muhammad (also in chapter 60). We have, moreover, also looked at the link that al-Jīlī draws in the chapter on the Qur'an (chapter 34) between being the Perfect Human and being the recipient of the Qur'anic revelation, a link that would appear to restrict the status of Perfect Human to Muhammad. In that context, as we have seen, al-Jīlī at times appears to come close to deifying Muhammad, an issue that crops up again here when he writes towards the end of this passage of the permissibility of directing 'acts of worship' (*'ibādāt*) towards Muhammad's name.

In his other works, too, al-Jīlī lays great emphasis on the perfection and superiority of Muhammad. His later book *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah fī al-ṣifāt al-Muḥammadiyyah* (*The Divine Perfections in the Muhammadan Attributes*) – a work that is modelled on and draws heavily from Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's (d. 1149) famous *Kitāb al-Shifā' bi-ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafá* (*The Book of Healing by Recognising the Rights of Muhammad*) – is, as its title suggests, a detailed exposition of how

Muhammad embodies each of the divine attributes.[65] This, of course, is one of the defining features of the Perfect Human. In that work al-Jīlī informs us, echoing the point made in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, that "Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – was specified for the greatest most-perfectness (*al-akmaliyyah al-kubrá*)".[66] Similarly, he opens his *Qāb al-qawsayn* (*At a Distance of Two Bows' Length*) – which he wrote after the *Kamālāt* and whose title refers to a Qur'anic passage (Q 53:9) often understood as a reference to Muhammad's proximity to God during his ascension – with a description in rhyming prose (*saj'*) of the exalted status and 'most-perfectness' of Muhammad:

> Glory be to God, Who made Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – His most perfect and most mighty, His best and most proud, His greatest and most glorious locus of manifestation (*majlāhu al-a'azz al-akmal al-afkhar al-afḍal al-amjad al-a'ẓam*), the locus of His gaze within the world, the locus of manifestation of His essence (*maẓhar dhātihi*) among the Children of Adam, the most appropriate and most perfect mirror of His majesty, His beauty, and His perfection, the interpreter (*tarjumān*) of His attributes – between origination and eternity – to His creatures with the most ancient tongue, the obscure one who is the most perfect of the Perfect Ones of existence (*akmal kumalā' al-wujūd al-mubham*), the taught one who is the embroidery of the garment of form and meaning, the well-established one who is the crown of distinction within synthesis (*farq al-jam'*), the pre-eternal "one" of the epoch (*wāḥid al-dahr*) who has been assimilated, God's secret (*sirr Allāh*) within existence, the treasury of generosity and beneficence, the sultan of the two realities, the reality of the two subtleties, the one of the two faces, the one described by the two descriptions, the encompasser of the two meanings, the possessor of the two perfections, from the source and the "where", the one made unique in his most-perfectness (*al-munfarid bi-al-akmaliyyah*), in form and meaning, the bearer of "at two bows' length or closer".(Q 53:9)[67]

Evidently, therefore, the idea of Muhammad as the one true Perfect Human is a central theme in al-Jīlī's works, to a much greater extent, I think, than it was in the works of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators, none of whom was as clear on the identity of the Perfect Human, nor as insistent that the title belongs to Muhammad alone.

If Muhammad is the one true Perfect Human in al-Jīlī's view, then what is the status of the other 'Perfect Ones' (*al-kummal*)? In the final chapter of *al-Insān al-kāmil* (chapter 63), al-Jīlī makes it clear that there is a plurality of individuals who hold the status and perform the functions of the Perfect Human. Referring to those whom he calls 'the People of Divine Proximity' (*ahl al-qurb al-ilāhī*), he describes them as

> the "Realisers" (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*) upon whom God built the foundation of this existence, and upon whose souls He made the orbits of the worlds

> revolve. For they are the locus of the Real's gaze within the worlds, indeed, they are the locus of God within existence. By the term "locus" (*al-maḥall*) I do not mean [the doctrine of] divine indwelling (*al-ḥulūl*), nor divine comparability (*al-tashbīh*), nor [that God has] direction (*al-jihah*); rather I mean by it that they are the locus of the appearance of the Real – May He be exalted (*maḥall ẓuhūr al-ḥaqq ta'ālá*) – through the appearance of the traces of His names and attributes within them and upon them (*bi-iẓhār āthār asmā'ihi wa-ṣifātihi fīhim wa-'alayhim*). So they are the ones who are addressed through the different types of mysteries (*al-mukhāṭabūn bi-anwā' al-asrār*), and they are the ones who are chosen for what is behind the veils (*al-muṣṭafūn limā warā' al-astār*) … So all of creation (*jamī' al-khalq*) is like a tool for them (*ka-al-ālah lahum*), [for they] are the bearers of those guarantees (*ḥummāl li-tilka al-āmānāt*) [see Q 33:72] that God made the property (*mulk*) of this group (*ṭā'ifah*), for they bear the guarantee figuratively (*majāzan*) for them, and they are those who bear it as a reality of God (*ḥaqīqatan li-Allāh*) – May He be exalted. So they are the locus of address (*maḥall al-mukhāṭabah*) for the speech of God (*kalām Allāh*) – May He be exalted – and the source of allusions (*mawrid al-ishārāt*) and the locus of manifestation of clear expression (*majlá al-bayān*).[68]

While these 'Realisers' perform some of the functions of the Perfect Human, therefore, it is nevertheless clear that theirs is a perfection of the second order. Thus when al-Jīlī compares their character and morals unfavourably to the character and morals of Muhammad in the passage from chapter 60, for instance, he is indicating that – to use the philosophical terminology that we saw above – while Muhammad has fully 'actualised' his essential perfection, their perfection remains at least partly a 'potential' perfection. Moreover, when al-Jīlī informs us that these lesser Perfect Humans are "attached" or "connected" to Muhammad, this suggests that their perfection somehow derives from the perfection of the Prophet. This calls to mind the idea of the Muhammadan Reality as the source from which other prophets and Friends of God draw their spiritual station, and as an eternal and ever-present spiritual reality which manifests itself in different individuals up to the present day. Al-Jīlī makes clear this connection between the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality and the perfection of the other Perfect Humans in a passage from *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah*:

> And he is called "the Muhammadan Reality", due to his being … the locus of manifestation (*maẓār=maẓhar?*) of the plane of synthesis and existence, which is the Muhammadan body (*al-haykal al-Muhammadī*). And even if it [namely, the Muhammadan Reality] has many loci of manifestation, it was nevertheless specified by this name, because Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – was the most perfect of its loci of manifestation (*akmal maẓāhirihā*). Nevertheless, there is no one in the human race who is not a locus of manifestation of this reality. In every human being it is apparent and hidden – every individual in accordance with its perfection and

> imperfection. And it necessarily appears in its perfection in every Perfect Human (*insān kāmil*).[69]

For al-Jīlī, then, human beings are more or less perfect in accordance with the extent to which the Muhammadan Reality appears within them, with the Perfect Humans being those in whom the Muhammadan Reality appears in its fullness.[70] In this sense, it becomes clear why Muhammad, as al-Jīlī sees it, is the only true Perfect Human, for even those individuals who can be called Perfect Humans are only perfect insofar as they are loci of manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality.

Who, we might ask in conclusion to this chapter, are these lesser Perfect Humans? Al-Jīlī indicates in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* that they are among the prophets and Friends of God. In this regard we might note here that al-Jīlī adopts from Ibn ʻArabī the idea that there are two types of prophethood, namely 'specific' or 'legislative' prophethood (*nubuwwah khāṣṣah*/*al-tashrīʻ*) and 'general prophethood' (*nubuwwah ʻāmmah*). In al-Jīlī's view, as in Ibn ʻArabī's, both kinds of 'prophet' are worthy of being classed among the 'Perfect Ones' (*al-kummal*) – though at no point in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, I think, does he call any individual other than Muhammad 'The Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

To deal with the 'legislative prophets' (who are, of course, also Friends of God) first, al-Jīlī's most in-depth treatment of the great prophets in the traditional Islamic view of sacred history comes in the chapters of *al-Insān al-kāmil* devoted to the scriptures. More specifically, we get a sense from the chapters on the Torah (chapter 36), the Psalms (chapter 37), and the Gospel (chapter 38) that he conceived of Moses, David, and Jesus – the prophets who received those scriptures – as Perfect Humans. According to his Sufi metaphysical interpretation, each of these scriptures represents a particular form of divine manifestation. He summarises this idea in the chapter on the Psalms:

> And know that the Psalms, in [the language of] allusion (*fī al-ishārah*) is an expression of (*ʻibārah ʻan*) the manifestations of the attributes of the [divine] acts (*tajalliyyāt ṣifāt al-afʻāl*), while the Torah is instead an expression of (*ʻibārah ʻan*) the manifestations of the totality of the names of the attributes (*tajalliyyāt jumlat asmāʾ al-ṣifāt*), and the Gospel is instead an expression of the manifestations of the names of the essence (*tajalliyyāt asmāʾ al-dhāt*), and the Furqan[71] is an expression of the manifestations of the totality of the attributes and names (*tajalliyyāt jumlat al-ṣifāt wa-al-al-asmāʾ*), in an unrestricted way (*muṭlaqan*), pertaining to both those [names and attributes] of the essence and the attributes (*al-dhātiyyah wa-al-ṣifātiyyah*), and the Qurʾan is an expression of the pure essence (*al-dhāt al-maḥḍ*).[72]

The relevance of this for the identity of the Perfect Humans is that, just as the Prophet Muhammad's perfection is connected to him receiving the manifestation of the divine essence that is expressed by the Qur'an, so too do the other messengers receive the particular divine manifestations that are represented by their scripture. In other words, they become loci of manifestation for

(some of) the divine names and attributes, and can therefore be called Perfect Humans.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysical conception of the scriptures produces a hierarchy of revelations, which is determined by the relative comprehensiveness of the different forms of divine manifestation that they represent. Thus the Qur'an, being an expression of the comprehensive divine essence itself (and, with respect to its name 'the Furqan', of all of the names and attributes), comes at the top of the hierarchy of scriptures, followed by the Gospel, an expression of the names of the divine essence, then the Torah, an expression of the names of the attributes, and finally the Psalms, an expression of the attributes of the acts. In this way, al-Jīlī integrates his conception of the scriptures into his idea of the levels of existence.[73] The significance of this, for our purposes, is that we can assume that the hierarchy of scriptures corresponds to a hierarchy of prophets, for, as al-Jīlī in makes clear in the chapter on the Psalms, the contents of the scriptures are determined by levels of knowledge of the prophets who receive them:

> Know that in every book (*kitāb*) that He sent down to a prophet (*nabī*), He only put forms of knowledge (*'ulūm*) that were of the level of that prophet's knowledge of the divine wisdom (*ḥikmah ilāhiyyah*), so that the prophet would not be ignorant (*lā yajhal*) of that which he brought. For the books are distinguished (*yatamayyiz*) from one another in superiority (*al-afḍaliyyah*), to the degree that one messenger (*mursal*) is distinguished from another in the view of God – May He be exalted. For this reason, the Qur'an is the best of the books of God (*afḍal kutub Allāh*) – May He be exalted – which were sent down upon his prophets (*anbiyā'*), because Muhammad was the best of the messengers (*afḍal al-mursalīn*).[74]

In light of the hierarchy of scriptures, then, we can infer that there is a hierarchy of perfection among the messengers, whereby Muhammad is the most perfect, followed by Jesus, then Moses, and then David.[75] What distinguishes Muhammad's prophethood – and his perfection – is its completeness or universality, as-Jīlī makes clear in chapter 63:

> Among them [namely, the prophets], there were those who were messengers (*rasūl*) to one person, and among them there were those who were messengers to a specific group (*ṭā'ifah makhṣūṣah*), and among them were those who were messengers to humankind (*al-ins*), but not the *jinns*. And God created no messenger for the blacks and the reds and the near and the far save Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace. For He sent him to all creatures (*arsalahu ilá sā'ir al-makhlūqāt*), and for this reason he was a "mercy to the worlds" (*raḥmah li-al-'ālamīn*) (Q 21:107).[76]

If there is a hierarchy of perfection among the 'legislative' prophets, therefore, there is also a hierarchy of perfection among the 'general' prophets or Friends of

God. We have already seen this is in Chapter 2 of this book in the context of al-Jīlī's distinction between those Friends of God whom he calls the 'People of the Essence' (*al-dhātiyyūn*), who are the 'People of God' (*ahl Allāh*) who receive the manifestation of the divine essence, and those he calls the 'People of the Self' (*al-nafsiyyūn*), who receive the manifestation of the divine names and attributes of the self (*al-ṣifāt al-nafsiyyah*) but not the manifestation of the essence or the attributes of the essence. Notably, al-Jīlī assigns to the former group the adjective 'Muhammadan' (*Muhammadiyyūn*) and tells us that their station is 'the station of the Beloved' (*maqām al-ḥabīb*), i.e. Muhammad, while he assigns to the latter group the adjective 'Mosaic' (*mūsawiyyūn*), and informs us that their station is 'the station of the One Spoken To' (*maqām al-kalīm*), that is, Moses.[77] This indicates that the hierarchy among the Friends of God or general prophets follows on from the hierarchy among the legislative prophets, for each of the Friends of God is a 'follower' (*tābi'*) or 'viceregent' (*khalīfah*) of a particular legislative prophet. Just as Muhammad is the most perfect of the legislative prophets, therefore, so too are his followers the most perfect of the general prophets.

Furthermore, in chapter 63, al-Jīlī indicates that there is also a hierarchy among the Muhammadan Friends of God:

> They are viceregents (*khulafā'*) of Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – in all the levels (*al-ḥadarāt*) [of *walāyah*], except for that which was specified for him [namely, Muhammad] with respect to God, that is, the defined portion that was singled out for him and not for them. So whoever among the Realisers (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*) is limited (*iqtaṣara*) to himself, represents (*nāba 'an*) Muhammad at the station of prophethood (*maqām al-nubuwwah*). And whoever guides [people] to God – May He be exalted – like our perfect masters among the *shaykhs* (*sādātinā al-kummal min al-mashāyikh*), represents him at the station of messengership (*maqām al-risālah*).[78]

All of this is a good illustration of al-Jīlī's dictum, expressed in the passage from chapter 60 quoted above, that the Perfect Ones "differ (*mutafāwitūn*) in their perfection".

Who, we might ask, are these perfect 'general prophets'? Al-Jīlī gives us a hint of their identity in the passage just quoted when he refers to "our perfect masters among the *shaykhs*". He elaborates on whom he means by this phrase in the passage that immediately follows that one:

> Know, then, that divine friendship (*al-walāyah*) is an expression of the Real's – Glory be to Him and may He be exalted – befriending (*tawallī*) of His servant through the appearance of His names and His attributes upon him, in terms of his knowledge (*'ilman*), entity (*'aynan*), spiritual state (*ḥālan*), the trace of enjoyment (*athar lidhdhah*), and mastery (*taṣarrufan*). And the prophethood of divine friendship (*nubuwwat al-walāyah*) is when

> the Real sends back the servant to the people to undertake the better ordering of their affairs (*li-yaqūm bi-umūrihim al-muṣliḥah li-shu'ūnihim*) at that time, depending on the condition of [his/their?] state (*ḥāl*). So he directs the people (*yudīr al-khalq*) through his spiritual state (*bi-ḥālihi*) and draws them to that which is better for them (*aṣlaḥ lahum*). So whoever among them called people to God – May He be exalted – before Muhammad was a messenger (*rasūlan*), and whoever [did so] after Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – was a viceregent of Muhammad (*khalīfah li-Muḥammad*). But [the latter] is not independent (*lā yastaqill*) in making his call through his own [powers] (*bi-da'wāhu bi-nafsihi*); rather, he is a follower (*taba'an*) of Muhammad. Such were those of our Sufi leaders (*sādātunā al-ṣūfiyyah*) in the past, such as Abū Yazīd [al-Biṣṭāmī], al-Junayd, the *shaykh* 'Abd al-Qādir [al-Jīlānī], Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, and those like them – May God be pleased with them.[79]

From this it is clear that, in al-Jīlī's view, the perfect Friends of God, post-Muhammad,[80] are to be identified with the great names from the Sufi past. To this, moreover, we can add the evidence of al-Jīlī's explicit identification, in his commentary on the *Futūḥāt*, of Ibn 'Arabī as the 'Perfect Human' (*al-insān al-kāmil*) of his time,[81] along with his aforementioned discussion of the appearance of the Muhammadan Reality in the illustrious Sufis al-Shiblī and al-Jabartī. Indeed, it seems that the post-Muhammadan perfect Friends of God identified by al-Jīlī seem to fall into two categories: either they are the great Sufis from the formative period of Sufism (the late ninth and early tenth century ce) – a group that includes al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, and al-Bisṭāmī – or they are individuals to whom al-Jīlī had some special personal connection – i.e. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the eponym of the Qādiriyyah *ṭarīqah* to which al-Jīlī was affiliated, Ibn 'Arabī, to whose Sufi metaphysical tradition al-Jīlī adhered, and Ismā'īl al-Jabartī, who was his own *shaykh*.

While al-Jīlī indicates in chapter 63 that these great Sufis are general prophets, or what he there calls 'prophets of divine friendship' (*anbiyā' al-walāyah*), he makes it clear that they remain inferior to Muhammad in their perfection; indeed, they are described as mere 'viceregents' or 'followers' of Muhammad in this regard. Muhammad, then, is not only the 'Seal of Prophets' (see Q 33:40) because he brought an end to legislative prophethood, but also – and perhaps more importantly – because he is the 'seal' of prophetic perfection, in the sense that he is the most perfect of the prophets and Friends of God. As al-Jīlī puts it in the chapter on the Torah:

> He left no point of entry (*madkhal*) for anyone, and was unique (*istaqalla*) in the matter, and sealed prophecy (*khatama al-nubuwwah*), because he left out nothing [from his revelation] that was needed, but rather brought it [all]. And none of the "Perfect Ones" (*al-kummal*) who came after him found anything worthy of indicating that Muhammad had not already indicated. So such a perfect one follows him (*yatba'uhu*), as he indicated, and becomes a follower

> (*tābi'*) [of his]. So the category of legislative prophethood (*nubuwwat al-tashrī'*) was cut off after him, and Muhammad was the Seal of Prophets, because he brought perfection, which no one else brought.[82]

Whatever the exalted metaphysical status and spiritual powers of the 'Perfect Ones', then, for al-Jīlī there is only one true Perfect Human, and that is the Prophet Muhammad. At the very end of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, he brings this all together, leaving us in no doubt that Muhammad is the most perfect of the Perfect Humans and, in fact, a quasi-divine being:

> The means (*wasīlah*) [of attaining 'realisation' (*al-taḥaqquq*)] of all of the prophets and Friends of God is Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace. So the means is the station of proximity (*maqām al-qurbah*) itself. And the first of its stations is the station of friendship (*maqām al-khillah*), and the end of the station of the Friend (*maqām al-khalīl*) [namely, Abraham] is the beginning of the station of the Beloved (*maqām al-ḥabīb*) [namely, Muhammad], for the essential Beloved (*al-ḥabīb al-dhātī*) is an expression of unitive loving desire (*al-ta'ashshuq al-ittiḥādī*), so each of the two lovers (*al-muta'ashshiqayn*) [namely, Muhammad and God] appears in the form of the other, and each stands in the station of the other … It was to this that He – Glory be to Him and may He be exalted – referred in His majestic Book, when He said to Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace: "Those who pledge allegiance to you [namely, Muhammad] only pledge allegiance to God", (Q 48:10) whereby He stood Muhammad in His own station (*aqāma Muḥammad maqām nafsihi*), and when He said: "Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed God." (Q 4:80) Subsequently Muhammad spoke openly to Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī when he saw him in his sleep and said to him: "O Messenger of God, forgive me, for loving God (*maḥabbat Allāh*) has distracted me (*shaghalatnī*) from loving you (*maḥabbatika*)." And he [namely, Muhammad] said to him: "O blessed one, loving God is loving me (*maḥabbat Allāh maḥabbatī*)." For just as Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – was a viceregent (*khalīfah*) of God, so too was God here a deputy (*nā'iban*) of Muhammad, and a deputy is a viceregent, and a viceregent is a deputy. So this one was that one and that one was this one (*dhāka huwa hādha wa-hādha huwa dhāka*). Due to this, Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – was made unique (*tafarrada*) in his perfection, so he sealed (*khatama*) the perfections and the divine stations in his inner nature, and his sealing of the station of messengership in his outer nature testifies to that.[83]

Notes

1 See Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 50.
2 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:391. See also Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 276.
3 See Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 18.

4 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. A al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, n.d.), 70; W. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabī's Own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*: 'The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom'", *Sophia Perennis* 1, no. 2 (1975), 88–128, 94.
5 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:40 [I 14]: "The equivocality of the word *Adam*. It is the name of *Adam the first* man … It is also the term designating the species."
6 Quoted in Chittick, "Chapter Headings", 49.
7 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 8.
8 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, 268.
9 See C. Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabī*, tr. P. Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 87–88; S. Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn 'Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 99–102.
10 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:89; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 98; Addas, *Quest*, 87; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 143. For a modern Islamic feminist reading of this and similar passages, see S. Shaikh, "In Search of *al-Insān*: Sufism, Islamic Law, and Gender", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009), no. 4, 781–822, 806–809.
11 See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 189–191; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 103–104; Ridgeon, *'Azīz Nasafī*, 188–190. Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 134; Hujwīrī had also earlier identified 40 *abdāl*. See Nūrbakhsh, *Farhang*, 6:6. It should however be noted that, elsewhere in his writings, Ibn 'Arabī identifies seven *abdāl*. See e.g. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:160, 2:7. In identifying seven, he was following, among others, al-Ḥakīm Tirmidhī. See Radtke and O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood*, 109–110.
12 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:9.
13 Ibid., 1:679.
14 Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 217.
15 See ibid.; Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:679, 3:87; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Mu'jam*, 144–145.
16 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 267–268. For a later expression of a similar idea, see also al-Nābulusī, *Sharḥ jawāhir al-nuṣūṣ fī ḥall kalimāt al-Fuṣūṣ*, two volumes in one (Egypt: Maṭba'at al-Zamān, 1887–1905), 315: "The Perfect Human was created from the Real – May He be exalted – and the woman (*al-mar'ah*) was created from the Perfect Human. So the Real loved the Perfect Human and the Perfect Human loved the woman."
17 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:679.
18 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:87. This notion that women are lesser than men in religion and intellect is found in a hadith recorded in Bukhārī. See R. Cornell, "Sufi Women's Spirituality: A Theology of Servitude", *Voices of Islam*, volume 1: *Voices of Tradition*, ed. V. Cornell (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2007), 167–174, 171.
19 This being said, I personally know of no instance in which Ibn 'Arabī or his leading interpreters use the term '*al-insān al-kāmil*' of a woman.
20 Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 79.
21 Quoted in Todd, *Sufi Doctrine*, 58.
22 See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 91–94; Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 33–35.
23 Q 17:20: "We bestow those gifts of your Lord on all, there is no gift of your Lord that is prohibited [to anyone]."
24 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:287; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 91–92.
25 Connected to this, Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters often refer to a three-tiered hierarchy among human beings. Thus Ibn 'Arabī writes, for instance, of the difference between the creeds of the masses (*'aqīdat al-'awāmm*), of the elect of the people of God (*khawāṣṣ ahl Allāh*), and of the "quintessence of the elect" (*khulāṣat al-khawāṣṣ*), for which see Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā*, 105–106. See also G. Schubert (ed.), *Al-Murāsalāt bayn Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa-Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nashr, 1995), 16, for a three-tiered scheme set out by al-Qūnawī.
26 See e.g. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:396, and the passages quoted in Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory*, 109–112. Interestingly, the concept of the 'animal human' does not appear to be an important one in the Qūnawī tradition. Thus al-Qāshānī, for instance,

does not include the term *al-insān al-ḥayawān* in his lexicon of Sufi metaphysical technical terms, nor does he discuss the term in his commentary on the passage of the *Fuṣūṣ* in which the term appears. See al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 253.

27 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:437; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 156.
28 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:296; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 156–157; Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 110–111; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 187.
29 See Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 168, quoted in Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 113.
30 Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 199. See also Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 112.
31 See Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 57–58 and *passim*. For the meaning of *ḥikmah* in Ibn ʻArabī's writings, see Rosenthal, "Ibn ʻArabī", 13–14.
32 See Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 236.
33 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 8.
34 Ibid., 242.
35 Ibid., 266.
36 Ibid.
37 Frank Griffel has suggested that Ibn ʻArabī's idea of prophecy has roots in the Avicennian philosophical conception of prophecy as an intense form of intellectual attainment, which, like Ibn ʻArabī's conception, served to reduce the gap between prophets and other human beings. F. Griffel, "Muslim Philosophers' Rationalist Explanation of Muhammad's Prophecy", *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. J.E. Brockopp (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 158–179, 178.
38 For Ibn ʻArabī's distinction between the two types of prophethood, see Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 62–64, 131; Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory*, 118–131; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 1038–1053; Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 50–51, 114–115; Y. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Aḥmadī Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1989), 71–76; Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics*, 142–145; Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā*, 60–72.
39 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:3.
40 Schubert, *al-Murāsalāt*, 16.
41 Ibid., 21.
42 Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, 491.
43 For this claim and the concept of the 'Seal of Sainthood', see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 128–146; Addas, *Quest*, 77–81; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 378–382; Lipton, *Rethinking*, 46–47.
44 See e.g. al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 2, where he describes Ibn ʻArabī as "the perfected, perfect *shaykh*" (*al-shaykh al-kāmil al-mukammal*). Similarly, al-Qūnawī's student al-Jandī refers to his teacher as "the Perfect Man of his age, the Pole of the Poles of the time and the *khalifah* of the Seal of Muhammadan Sanctity (Ibn ʻArabi)". Quoted in Chittick, "Last Will and Testament", 45.
45 Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 236. See also Afîfî, *Mystical Philosophy*, 72: "Each prophet in the *Fuṣûṣ* is called *a* 'logos' but not *the* Logos – the latter term being preserve for the 'head' of the hierarchy – i.e. Mohammed." For the Ibn ʻArabian conception of the logos, see Chapter 2 of this book.
46 Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yi saʻādat*, 28. The three qualities are: (1) that to the prophet is unveiled (*kashf shavad*) in wakefulness (*bīdārī*) that which is unveiled to the common people in sleep; (2) that while the souls of the common people only affect their own bodies, the soul of the prophet affects the bodies of others; (3) that the prophet gets to know forms of knowledge (*ʻulūm*) that the common people learn through instruction through his inner reality (*bāṭin-i khwīsh*).
47 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:151, Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 94.
48 See esp. in this regard Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:142, where Ibn ʻArabī refers to how the Muhammadan Reality "extends to every Perfect Human".
49 Quoted in Chittick, "Chapter Headings", 86. See also al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 267: "The Greatest Name is only with our Prophet Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace – and not with any of the other prophets."

50 Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 110.
51 Ibid., 214.
52 Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 4:433; al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 500. See also the passages from the *Futūḥāt* quoted in al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 278: "He [namely, Muhammad] is the most complete synthesis (*al-majmūʻ al-tāmm*) and the most perfect exemplar (*al-barnāmaj al-akmal*)", and Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger", 353, where he similarly informs us that "the manifestation of the Real in the mirror of Muhammad is the most perfect, most balanced, and most beautiful manifestation, because of his mirror's particular qualities".
53 Al-Farghānī, *Muntahá al-madārik*, 41.
54 Al-Qāshānī, *Muʻjam*, 162.
55 Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 267.
56 See Lipton, *Rethinking*, 77.
57 See Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:142.
58 See esp. ibid., 3:141–146 (ch. 337). For "the keys to the unseen" and related concepts in Ibn ʻArabī's thought, see Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 863–870. For "the all-comprehensive words" motif, see Ḥakīm, *al-Muʻjam*, 274–276; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 239; Lipton, *Rethinking*, 39–40. Ibn ʻArabī explains that Muhammad being given "the all-comprehensive words" means that, while Adam was taught the names of all things (see Q 2:31), Muhammad was taught the *meanings* (*musammiyyāt*, *maʻānī*) of those names. See Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 214; al-Shaʻrānī, *al-Kibrīt*, 10.
59 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 207.
60 Quoted in Goichon, *Lexique*, 219. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:113 (I 51): "For every notion superadded to an essence is an adjunct to it and does not perfect its essence, and this is the meaning of accident."
61 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:73 (I 34):

> For man is not granted his ultimate perfection [*kamālahu al-akhīr*] at the outset; for perfection exists in him only potentially [*bi-al-quwwah*], and in his beginnings he lacks this act … Nor is it necessarily obligatory in the case of every individual who is endowed with some thing in potency, that this thing should become actual [*yakhruj dhālik ilá al-fiʻl*].

62 See also al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 78, where he explains that the Perfect Human is the individual "in whom [the divine] life (*al-ḥayāt*) appears in its complete form (*ʻalá ṣūratihā al-tāmmah*)", whereas the individual "in whom life appears, but in a form that is not complete", is called 'the perfect animal human' (*al-insān al-kāmil al-ḥayayānī*). This, of course, evokes Ibn ʻArabī's distinction between the Perfect Human and the animal human.
63 In his *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah*, meanwhile, al-Jīlī explains the ability of some individuals and not others to manifest perfection in terms of the Ibn ʻArabian (and Avicennian) concept of 'preparedness' (*istiʻdād*). See al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt*, 332. See also chapter four of *Qāb al-qawsayn*, on 'The distinctiveness of his [namely, Muhammad's] receptivity from the receptivity of every other existent'.
64 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 207–208.
65 See al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt*, esp. 64–314.
66 Ibid., 325.
67 Quoted in Nabhānī, *Jawāhir*, 1:1496. See also ibid., 1:1499, and the quotation from the same work in Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger", 356: "God the Exalted has set apart Muhammad, God's blessings and peace be upon him, for the greatest and most perfect divine manifestations which no other capacity can accept in this world or the next."
68 Ibid., 262–263.
69 Al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt*, 325.
70 Al-Jīlī expresses this same idea from a somewhat different perspective in *Qāb al-qawsayn*, where he declares that the only way to reach God is through Muhammad. See Nabhānī, *Jawāhir*, 1:1498; Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger", 356.

71 The term *al-furqān* usually denotes another name for the Qur'an. See e.g. Q 25:01, 2:185.
72 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 127.
73 See F. Morrissey, *'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī's Sufi Metaphysical Treatment of the Scriptures in 'al-Insān al-kāmil'* (Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2018).
74 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 125.
75 It should be noted, however, that, other than his emphasis on the superiority of Muhammad, al-Jīlī never sets out this hierarchy in explicit terms. Furthermore, the hierarchy of prophets is also complicated by the fact that, in the course of his description of his mystical ascension in chapter 61, al-Jīlī places Moses in the sixth heaven (as in traditional accounts of the Prophet's *mi'rāj*), and Jesus and David in the fourth heaven. See ibid., 237–238.
76 Ibid., 265–266.
77 Ibid., 91.
78 Ibid., 265.
79 Ibid., 265.
80 It should here be noted that, as we saw above, prior to the age of the historical Muhammad non-Muslims such as Plato were able to become perfect Friends of God, in al-Jīlī's view.
81 See al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ*, 83. See also ibid., 66, where he describes Ibn 'Arabī as 'The Greatest Friend of God' (*al-walīy al-akbar*), 'The Most Splendid and Most Magnificent Pole' (*al-quṭb al-a'ẓam al-afkhar*), 'The Locus of Appearance of the [Divine] Attribute of Knowledge' (*maẓhar al-ṣifah al-'ilmiyyah*), 'The Locus of Manifestation of [God's] Essential and Governing Perfections' (*majlā al-kamālāt al-'ayniyyah wa-al-ḥukmiyyah*), 'The Tongue of Reality' (*lisān al-ḥaqīqah*), and 'The Master of the Path' (*ustādh al-ṭarīqah*).
82 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 119–120.
83 Ibid., 279.

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Conclusion

Influences and impact

We have seen on several occasions in this book that al-Jīlī's conception of the Perfect Human took that important Ibn 'Arabian idea to a new stage in its development. Prior to al-Jīlī, Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters had thought of the Perfect Human primarily in terms of the Perfect Human's synthesis of the created and the divine, that is, as a 'synthetic being' (*kawn jāmi'*) who was both a microcosm of the cosmos and a locus of manifestation for the divine names and attributes. In their minds, it seems, this idea was connected to key concepts such as the 'Pole' (*al-quṭb*), the 'Muhammadan Reality' (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muhammadiyyah*), and the 'Friends of God' (*awliyā' Allāh*), yet they often only hinted at these connections without spelling them out in full. They had, moreover, been rather ambiguous about the identity of the Perfect Human, at times indicating that the term referred to humanity as a whole, at others suggesting that it was a title of the prophets and Friends of God, and at still others restricting the title to the Prophet Muhammad. While Ibn 'Arabī's commentators did develop and clarify these ideas, their overall conception of the Perfect Human is faithful and close to that of their '*shaykh*'.

While al-Jīlī took on many of these Ibn 'Arabian ideas, he also clarified and elaborated upon them in a significant way. Thus, while he retains the notion of the Perfect Human as a 'synthetic being', it is the *divine* aspect of the Perfect Human that he emphasises, over and above the fallible human aspect. Indeed, at times in *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his other writings al-Jīlī appears to suggest that the essence or inner reality of the Perfect Human – the Muhammadan Reality – is similar or even identical to the divine essence itself. In this regard, he goes further than Ibn 'Arabī or his commentators from the Qūnawī tradition, who regard the Muhammadan Reality as the first manifestation or 'entification' of the simple divine essence. Furthermore, al-Jīlī is also much more explicit than those earlier Sufi thinkers in identifying the Perfect Human, in the true sense of the term, with the Prophet Muhammad. Other 'Perfect Humans', as he sees it, are merely loci of manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality, the one true Pole, and Perfect Human, their 'perfection' being a mere echo or reflection of his true perfection. Given al-Jīlī's quasi-deification of the Perfect Human, this means that at times the line between Muhammad and God becomes considerably blurred in his thought.

Finally, it might be noted that al-Jīlī differs from Ibn ʻArabī and his interpreters by virtue of the significance that he accords to the idea of the Perfect Human. While the earlier thinkers in the Ibn ʻArabian tradition had conceived of the Perfect Human as the level of existence that synthesises all of the other levels of existence, nevertheless al-Jīlī seems to be the first to view the Perfect Human as the key to the solution of the problem of the one and the many. He is the first, in other words, to put the Perfect Human at the heart of his Sufi metaphysics – and therefore, at the heart of his conception of Islam. It is for this reason that the term *al-insān al-kāmil* is associated with al-Jīlī, more than anyone else.

If it is accepted that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human constitutes a new development in the history of Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysics, then this poses two questions. First, what was it that led al-Jīlī to take the idea of the Perfect Human in a new direction? And, second, what was the impact of his new conception of the Perfect Human on later Sufi metaphysical thought?

Taking the former question first, we must begin by stressing that our knowledge of al-Jīlī's sources of influence is necessarily limited by our relative lack of information about his life. Aside from those few individuals and books that he mentions by name in his writings, we do not know whom he met in the course of his life or which texts he was reading. In answering the question of his reasons for taking the idea of the Perfect Human in a new direction, therefore, we are forced here to resort to considering some of the broader trends that marked the period in which he lived in general and that mark his thought in particular. I have mentioned already, in this regard, the tendency in the Later Middle Period of Islamic history to conceive of Muhammad in highly exalted, cosmic terms, to the extent that Muhammad was elevated to almost superhuman status. It is possible that this tendency was part of a broader trend within Sunni thought and piety in the Middle Periods, namely what Marshall Hodgson called "the moulding of Islam as a whole in a Shiʻitic direction".[1] As was indicated in the chapter on the Pole, this tendency is discernible in the Ibn ʻArabian tradition as a whole, as both medieval Sunni critics of Ibn ʻArabian Sufism such as Ibn Khaldūn and several modern scholars have pointed out. Thus when Hodgson wrote, "Under the guise of Ṣûfism, the most esoteric Shîʻî attempts to unravel a natural cosmic symbolism found their legitimacy", it was Ibn ʻArabian metaphysical Sufism that he had principally in mind.[2] If what Hodgson says is true, then it is also fair to say that al-Jīlī's conception of the Perfect Human bears an even closer resemblance to certain Shiʻi ideas of the Imamate – particularly in his emphasis on the divine aspect of Muhammad and his notion of the infallibility of the Perfect Human.[3]

It should be stressed, however, that this is not to suggest either that al-Jīlī was secretly a Shiʻi or that he was necessarily directly influenced by Shiʻi thought,[4] but rather to highlight the continuities between Shiʻi and Sufi metaphysics in this period. The influence, in other words, was not all one way, for Ibn ʻArabian Sufism also left its mark on Shiʻism.[5] Such continuities can be clearly discerned if we consider, for instance, the parallels between al-Jīlī's idea about the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality in the forms of Sufi Friends of God such as al-Jabartī, and the similar notion of 'projection'

(*burūz*, *barazāt*) developed by the important Iranian Shi'i Sufi Muhammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 1464), who was born less than 30 years after al-Jīlī.[6] In a similar way to al-Jīlī, Nūrbakhsh held that "the Muhammadan Reality appears in the human body through the process of 'projection (*barazāt*)' ".[7] Like al-Jīlī, moreover, he explicitly disassociated this process from 'transmigration' (*tanāsukh*), and defined it as the process whereby "a complete soul pours into a perfect being (*kāmil*) in the same way that epiphanies pour into him and he becomes their locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*)".[8] Nūrbakhsh identified this 'perfect being' with both the Seal of Sainthood and the awaited Mahdi of the Shi'ah, titles which he in fact claimed for himself.[9] Significantly, Nūrbakhsh explicitly drew upon Ibn 'Arabī for this and other ideas of his, in addition to his Shi'i influences.[10] This allows us to situate al-Jīlī's ideas about the Perfect Human within the context of a wider tendency in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries whereby Ibn 'Arabian Sufi ideas about the Perfect Human and Muhammadan Reality and Shi'i ideas about the Imams and the Mahdi were mixed up with one another in a kind of 'whirlpool effect',[11] a process that continued in subsequent centuries, particularly in Iran.

Aside from the possible impact of Shi'i ideas, another potential factor to take into consideration is the inter-religious climate of al-Jīlī's time and place. As we have seen, his notion that Muhammad is the one true Perfect Human can be read as an indication of the superiority of Muhammad over the other prophets, and thereby of Islam over the other religions, particularly Judaism and Christianity. As Hodgson again wrote,

> This exaltation of Muhammad expressed a hardening communalism which looked less to the eternal islâm that could appear, as the Qur'ân makes clear, in any community, and more to the historical community in which islâm was made most perfect; by the Middle Periods, the other communities were felt to be mere relics of the past, not very relevant to real life anyway.[12]

In this regard, it should again be noted that in those chapters of *al-Insān al-kāmil* that are devoted to the scriptures, al-Jīlī clearly indicates the superiority of the Qur'an over the other scriptures, along with its 'abrogation' (*naskh*) of those scriptures.[13] To this end, he calls attention, for instance, to the incompleteness of the Torah in its propagated form,[14] and to the Christians' overly literal – and therefore mistaken – interpretation of the Trinitarian formula with which, so he believes, their Gospel begins.[15] In the latter regard, in fact, al-Jīlī's emphasis on the idea that Muhammad is the one true Perfect Human might profitably be viewed as a response to the Christian ideas of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which he criticises in the chapter on the Gospel on the grounds that they limit the universal theophany and the perfection of humanity to Jesus and the other two persons of the Trinity alone.[16] Furthermore, we have also looked at how his Sufi metaphysical interpretation of the signification of the scriptures, whereby he associates the different scriptures

with different forms of divine manifestation, leads him to construct a hierarchy of scriptures and prophets, with the Qur'an and Muhammad at its summit. While it would be wrong to imagine that al-Jīlī is engaging in inter-religious polemic in *al-Insān al-kāmil*,[17] it does seem reasonable to suppose that the status of Muhammad as the one true Perfect Human in his thought is tied up with a belief in the superiority of Muhammad's community – the Muslim *ummah* – over the other religious communities. This would also explain his identification of the post-Muhammadan Perfect Humans with Sufi Muslims like al-Junayd, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and Ibn 'Arabī.

A third possible reason for the shift in emphasis and focus that we find in al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human, and one that is more closely connected to his own biography, is his adherence to a branch of the Qādiriyyah Sufi *ṭarīqah*. We have noted on a number of occasions al-Jīlī's special sense of affinity with the Sufi from whom that *ṭarīqah* gets its name, Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. In light of this, it is noteworthy that many of the poems and 'symbolic discourses' (*maqālāt ramziyyah*) attributed to 'Abd al-Qādir make reference to concepts that would later be connected in the Ibn 'Arabian Sufi tradition to the idea of the Perfect Human, particularly the concepts of the 'Pole' (*al-quṭb*) and the 'Saviour' (*al-ghawth*).[18] Thus one of these discourses, for instance, takes the form of a conversation between 'The Greatest Saviour' (*al-ghawth al-a'ẓam*) and God:[19]

> He [namely, God] said, "O Greatest Saviour, I have appeared in nothing (*mā ẓahartu fī shay'*) like how I appeared in humanity (*ka-ẓuhūrī fī al-insān*)"… Then I [namely, the Greatest Saviour] asked him, "O Lord, from what did you create the angels?" He said, "O Greatest Saviour, I created the angels from the light of humanity (*min nūr al-insān*), and I created humanity from My light (*min nūrī*). O Greatest Saviour, I made humanity the place of My concealment (*maṭiyyatī*), and I made all other beings the place of their concealment. O Greatest Saviour, the blessings (*ni'm*) of the seeker are Me, and the blessings of the thing sought are humanity … O Greatest Saviour, humanity is My secret (*sirrī*), and I am his secret. If human beings knew their station (*manzilatahu*) in My eyes, they would say with every breath, 'There is no kingship today except ours!'…O Greatest Saviour, the body (*jism*) of humanity, and their soul, heart, spirit, hearing, sight, hand, and foot – I appeared in all of that, through Myself – to Myself – there is no 'he' but I, there is no I but 'him'… O Greatest Saviour, love is a veil (*ḥijāb*) between the lover and the beloved, so if the love of the lover is annihilated (*funiya*), he reaches the beloved. O Greatest Saviour, sleep in me, but not like the sleep of the common people, and you will see me (*taranī*)." So I [namely, the Greatest Saviour] said, "O Lord, how can I sleep in you?" He said, "By extinguishing pleasures from the body (*khumūd al-jism 'an al-lidhdhāt*), and extinguishing sensual desires from the soul (*khumūd al-nafs 'an al-shahwāt*), and extinguishing thoughts from the heart (*khumūd al-qalb 'an al-khaṭrāt*), and extinguishing moments

> from the spirit (*khumūd al-rūḥ ʿan al-laḥẓāt*), and the annihilation of your essence in the essence (*fanāʾ dhātika fī al-dhāt*)."[20]

The reader will recognise many of the themes that we have looked at over the course of this book: humanity's nature as the most perfect locus of divine manifestation; the creation of humanity from God's light; the manifestation of God within the body of the human being; the sinlessness of the perfect human being; and, ultimately, the blurring of the divine and human essences. While establishing the precise nature of al-Jīlī's engagement with the ideas of ʿAbd al-Qādir and the Qādirī tradition – in isolation from the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī and the Ibn ʿArabian tradition[21] – would require a separate study, it can nevertheless be said here that it seems plausible that al-Jīlī's particular interest in the idea of the Perfect Human and the distinctive features of his treatment of that idea may be a result of the impact of Qādirī ideas on his thought.

While these are certainly factors to take into account and worthy of further research when considering the distinctive qualities of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human, most of all I think that that distinctiveness can be explained by his desire to give Ibn ʿArabī's ideas greater clarity and systematic form – and to develop or correct them where he found them wanting in some way. So, whereas Ibn ʿArabī and his interpreters do not explicitly identify the Pole with the Perfect Human, al-Jīlī makes this link explicit: "Know … that the Perfect Human is the Pole around whom the orbits of existence revolve, from the beginning [of time] to its end."[22] Whereas they equivocate on the identity of the Perfect Human, al-Jīlī is unambiguous in his insistence that the one true Perfect Human is Muhammad: "wherever the term 'Perfect Human' in an unqualified sense occurs in my writings, I only mean by it Muhammad".[23] And whereas they insist on the human aspect of the Perfect Human, al-Jīlī at times suggests that this human aspect is annihilated amidst the divine manifestation. On account of this greater clarity and daringness, al-Jīlī's work is often, at least in my experience, considerably easier to read than the works of Ibn ʿArabī and his interpreters. As suggested in Chapter 1, this goes some way to explaining the popularity of al-Jīlī's work as an introduction to Ibn ʿArabian Sufi metaphysics. Nevertheless, as I have tried to show throughout this book, it is important not to think of everything that al-Jīlī writes simply as the 'Ibn ʿArabian position'. As has become clear, he differs from his predecessors in several respects. In this sense, *al-Insān al-kāmil* constitutes not only a clarification and systematisation of Ibn ʿArabian ideas, but also an elaboration upon them.[24]

Turning finally to the question of al-Jīlī's impact on later Sufi metaphysical thought, it should be stressed at the outset that our level of knowledge of the Ibn ʿArabian Sufi metaphysical tradition in the late medieval and early modern periods is insufficient at present to allow us fully to do justice to the question.[25] Thinking in terms of broad trends, we have already noted that Islamic piety in the Later Middle Period was marked by enhanced veneration and exaltation of the Prophet. This tendency, it seems, only got stronger as time went on, at least until the emergence and spread of the (generally anti-Sufi) Salafi and modernist

forms of Islam in recent times. The Christian missionary and scholar of Islam Constance Padwick (d. 1968) identified this trend in her study of Islamic prayer-manuals in common use in the twentieth century, when she wrote of "a tacit, though never explicit, deifying of the Prophet, whose position in these prayers is so immeasurably beyond that of humanity".[26]

As Valerie Hoffman and Claude Addas have argued, in response to the idea put about by scholars such as Fazlur Rahman, J. Spencer Trimingham, and John Voll that the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of so-called 'Neo-Sufism', the roots of this early modern Sufi 'prophetocentrism' are probably to be found in the medieval Ibn 'Arabian tradition, including the writings of al-Jīlī.[27] Indeed, Padwick also makes reference in her aforementioned study to prayers in which the names of Muhammad are the same as the names of God, a phenomenon which might remind us of al-Jīlī's ascription of the traditional 99 most beautiful names of God to Muhammad in his *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah*. Given that al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil* served as a 'mediating work' – to use J. Spencer Trimingham's phrase – through which Ibn 'Arabian ideas were disseminated among the Sufi orders, it is possible that al-Jīlī's conception of Muhammad affected the way that Muhammad was thought about in later Sufism, particularly of the more popular variety.[28]

Establishing all this with greater certitude would require further research. Al-Jīlī's influence has been discerned in Sufi literature produced across the Islamic world, and assessing the true extent of the impact of his idea of the Perfect Human would require research into manuscript collections from Sub-Saharan Africa to South-East Asia. This is beyond the scope of this study. So too is the question of the extent of al-Jīlī's influence on Islamic political thought. As noted in the introduction to this book, recent scholarship has shown how the Sufi idea of the Perfect Human was adopted in Timurid political thought – and from there taken into Aqquyunlu, Ottoman, and Mughal political theory – where it became, along with the astrological idea of the ruler as the 'Lord of Conjunction' (*ṣāḥib qirān*), a key component of the new vocabulary of sacred kingship.[29] It seems significant that the integration of the idea of the Perfect Human into Islamic political thought came in the two centuries following the death of al-Jīlī, the thinker who had made that idea central to Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysics. Yet, as noted in the introduction, further research would be required to demonstrate whether or not al-Jīlī directly influenced the theorists of sacred kingship.[30]

What we can do in the present state of our knowledge is draw attention, by way of illustration, to some examples of important later Muslim thinkers who were unmistakably influenced by al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human. The first example of such a thinker is the important seventeenth century Bosnian Ibn 'Arabian Sufi of the Bayramī-Malāmī *ṭarīqah* 'Abd Allāh al-Bosnawī (d. 1644). Al-Bosnawī, who received his education in Sufism in Istanbul and Bursa, travelled through Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz, and eventually settled and died in Konya, is most famous for his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, which he first wrote in Ottoman Turkish and then translated into Arabic.[31] While he was well-versed in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, therefore, and deeply attached to al-Qūnawī (next to

whose grave in Konya he is buried), al-Bosnawī was also influenced by al-Jīlī. A work he wrote on the levels of existence titled *al-Qirá al-rūḥī al-mamdūd li-al-aḍyāf al-wāridīn min marātib al-wujūd* (*Spiritual Hospitality to the Guests Arriving from the Levels of Existence*) is based upon al-Jīlī's treatise on the levels of existence, *Marātib al-wujūd*. Al-Bosnawī explains in the introduction to this work that al-Jīlī's treatise was put into verse form by someone called Ghars al-Dīn al-Ash'arī al-Wafā'ī,[32] whom al-Bosnawī quotes directly:

> The levels (*al-marātib*) that he [namely, al-Wafā'ī] composed verses on (*naẓẓamahā*) according to the chain of existence [set out by] the masters of taste and witnessing (*arbāb al-dhawq wa-al-shuhūd*) are the [same as] the levels that were written about by the gnostic of his time (*'ārif zamānihi*), the majestic shaykh who attained realisation (*al-shaykh al-muḥaqqiq al-jalīl*), and who mystically tasted the knowledge of the levels and the path (*al-dhā'iq adhwāq ma'ārif al-marātib wa-al-sabīl*), the possessor of exalted mystical taste (*ṣāḥib al-dhawq al-'alīy*), 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, in his book called *Marātib al-wujūd*.[33]

It is evident, therefore, not only that al-Bosnawī held al-Jīlī in very high esteem, but also that he adopted aspects of al-Jīlī's particular Sufi metaphysical worldview. Significantly for us, this seems to have extended to al-Bosnawī's conception of the Prophet Muhammad as the Perfect Human. At the very beginning of his treatise, al-Bosnawī describes Muhammad in a way that suggests the influence of al-Jīlī:

> [He] appeared in the furthest of the levels of appearance, in the form of the mystery of the absolute, veiled unseen (*sirr al-ghayb al-muṭlaq al-mastūr*), due to his encompassing of universality (*iḥāṭat al-kulliyyah*) and his attainment of the perfect preparedness (*kamāl al-isti'dād*) for the intended goal. Within him was inaugurated the divine form (*al-ṣūrah al-ilāhiyyah*), from which appeared the universal matters – including the manifestations of the names (*al-tajalliyyāt al-asmā'iyyah*) and the divine gifts (*al-hibāt al-ilāhiyyah*) – and to which it shall return. So he revealed both the Real and the [true] religion (*al-dīn*), according to how they appeared to him, and he made evident the levels of the ascent to the presence of the Cloud (*ḥaḍrat al-'amā'*) and the station of synthesis and generosity (*maqām al-jam' wa-al-jūd*).
>
> And he – May God bless him and grant him peace – through his human existence and his perfect, universal, Muhammadan entification (*ta'ayyunihi al-kullī al-kamālī al-muḥammadī*), brought the spirits of the receptacles out from the confinement of their elemental bodies (*ḍīq al-jusūm al-'unṣuriyyah*), and the darkness of the lower human attributes (*ẓulmat al-ṣifāt al-bashariyyah al-sufliyyah*) to the expanse of unlimitedness (*al-iṭlāq*) and the waystations of illumination and witnessing (*manāzil al-ishrāq wa-al-shuhūd*). In the same way, the first entification (*al-ta'ayyun al-awwal*), which is him in his reality (*ḥaqīqah*) – May God bless him and grant him peace – brought out the forms of the names from total consumption of

> the essential unqualified oneness (*al-aḥadiyyah al-dhātiyyah*), and the possible forms from the unseen realms of the unseen and from non-existence, into the desert of existence.
>
> And [may God bless] his family and his companions, who took on his traits (*takhallaqū bi-akhlāqihi*), and so reached the presence of the all-merciful mercy (*ḥaḍrat al-raḥmah al-raḥmāniyyah*), by being adorned with the divine attributes and the perfect, universal Muhammadan traits (*al-akhlāq al-kulliyyah al-kamāliyyah al-muḥmmadiyyah*), like delegates [for him] (*al-wufūd*) … And no one attained the witnessing of the Cloud (*al-shuhūd al-ʻamāʼī*) and the all-merciful, synthetic unveiling (*al-kashf al-jamʻī al-raḥmānī*), except our Lord Muhmmad, [who attained it] by virtue of his reality (*ḥaqīqatan*), and the perfect heirs (*warathat al-kāmilīn*), as an inheritance (*warāthah*).[34]

While it might be said that this conception of Muhammad reflects the view of Muhammad in the Ibn ʻArabian commentary tradition more broadly, there are several elements of al-Bosnawī's conception of Muhammad that evoke important and distinctive aspects of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human. These include his blurring of Muhammad and the divine (for instance, by associating Muhammad with the "divine form", by suggesting that Muhammad reached the level of the "Cloud", i.e. of the hidden divine essence itself, and by describing how Muhammad's family and companions "took on the traits" of Muhammad, a reworking of a hadith, which, as we shall see below, more commonly refers to how the Perfect Humans "take on the traits" of *God*), his declaration that Muhammad's perfection involved a transformation from limited "humanness" (*al-ṣifāt al-bashariyyah*) to (divine) "unlimitedness", and his explicit limitation of the station of perfection, properly speaking, to Muhammad (the other 'Perfect Ones' being perfect only by virtue of their "inheritance" [*warāthah*] of the Muhammadan Reality and their manifestation of his traits). The fact that al-Bosnawī goes on to cite al-Jīlī by name in the passage immediately following this one would suggest that he indeed had al-Jīlī's conception of Muhammad as the Perfect Human in mind here.

The second example of al-Jīlī's influence comes from the famous lexicon of philosophical, theological, scientific, and mystical technical terms titled *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn*, which was compiled by the North Indian scholar Muhammad Aʻlá al-Tahānawī in the late eighteenth century.[35] Tahānawī's lexicon contains a number of long extracts from al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil*.[36] Most importantly for our purposes, in his entry on 'the human being' (*al-insān*), al-Tahānawī devotes about a third of his discussion of the Sufi conception of the human being to a direct quotation from chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, including, for instance, al-Jīlī's key statement, "wherever the term 'Perfect Human' in an unqualified sense occurs in my writings, I only mean by it Muhammad, out of propriety for his most exalted station".[37] While al-Tahānawī also quotes an extract from al-Qūnawī's *Fukūk* defining the Perfect Human as "the *barzakh* between necessity and contingency",[38] nevertheless his extensive citation of al-Jīlī in this context would suggest that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human was taken as representative of *the* Sufi position in later Islamic thought.

Another important modern text attesting to the impact of al-Jīlī's conception of the Perfect Human is the *Mawāqif* of the famous nineteenth century Algerian resistance leader and Ibn 'Arabian Sufi thinker 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī.[39] As noted in Chapter 1, 'Abd al-Qādir explicitly disagreed with al-Jīlī on certain issues. Specifically, he took issue both with those points where al-Jīlī had challenged Ibn 'Arabī – that is, on the nature of God's knowledge (*'ilm*), will (*irādah*), and power (*qudrah*) – and, more significantly for our purposes, with what he deemed to be the pernicious social effect of al-Jīlī's emphasis on the quasi-divine status of the Perfect Human, which 'Abd al-Qādir believed had helped inspire an anti-modern cult of *walāyah* and, with that, a fatalistic attitude among ordinary Muslims.[40] Nevertheless, the Emir 'Abd al-Qādir was also positively influenced by al-Jīlī and clearly held him in high regard, describing him as "the great imam (*al-imām al-kabīr*), the knower of God (*al-'ārif bi-Allāh*)", and declaring that he himself was "not [even] a drop in the ocean (*qaṭrah min baḥr*) of the imam al-Jīlī".[41] Moreover, despite his belief that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human had had certain deleterious consequences for Muslim society (in particular, the profusion of exaggerated claims to 'divine friendship' by pseudo-mystics), 'Abd al-Qādir was a proponent of the Ibn 'Arabian conception of the idea,[42] and was clearly influenced by aspects of al-Jīlī's conception. Thus 'Abd al-Qādir, like al-Jīlī, gave the Prophet Muhammad a key role in his Sufi metaphysics,[43] and held that Muhammad was the one true Perfect Human.[44] Connected to this, he adopted the idea that the Muhammadan Reality becomes manifest in other, lesser Perfect Humans.[45] This is attested by a passage from the thirteenth 'stopping place' (*mawqif*) of his *Mawāqif*, which evidently is related in an intertextual way to al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil*:

> God – May He be exalted – said: "I will inform you of the interpretation of that which you were not able to forbear" (Q 18:78). I had been very fond of (*mugharriman bi-*) reading the books of the folk (*al-qawm*) [namely, the Sufis] – May God be pleased with them – since my youth, without wayfaring along their path (*sālik ṭarīqihim*). During one of these reading sessions I stumbled upon words emitted by the leaders of the folk and the great ones among them (*sādāt al-qawm wa-akābirihim*). My poems were based on them [namely, these words] and my soul was seized by them, in keeping with my belief in their words, according to what they intended, for I was certain (*yaqīn*) of their perfect manners (*ādābihim al-kāmilah*) and their excellent morals (*akhlāhim al-fāḍilah*). These included the saying of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī [=al-Jīlānī] – May God be pleased with him: "You, the assemblies of prophets, were given the title (*al-laqab*) [of prophet], and we were given that which you were not given." And the saying of Abū al-Ghayth Ibn Jamīl – May God be pleased with him: "We plunged into seas at the shores of which the prophets stopped." And the saying of al-Shiblī – May God be pleased with him – to his student: "Do you testify that I am Muhammad the Messenger of God?" and his student said to him, "I testify that you are Muhammad the Messenger of God." And many other sayings like this.[46]

Here the Emir ʻAbd al-Qādir is evidently expressing a form of al-Jīlī's idea that the Muhammadan Reality becomes manifest in the post-Muhammadan Friends of God. Indeed, he claims this status for himself:

> My soul was not calmed by any of what those who interpreted these words [of al-Jīlānī, Ibn Jamīl, and al-Shiblī) said, until God – May He be exalted – granted me proximity (*al-mujāwarah*) to him, through a beautiful blessing. One day I was in seclusion (*al-khalwah*), turned towards [God], and remembering (*adhkur*) God – May He be exalted. The Real – May He be exalted – took me from the world, and from myself, and then returned me, while I was saying, "Were Moses son of ʻImrān alive, he would have to follow me." This was my original composition (*inshāʾ*), rather than by way of narration (*ḥikāyah*). I knew that this statement was one of the remnants (*baqāyā*) of [God] taking me away, and that I had been annihilated in the Messenger of God (*fāniyan fī rasūl Allāh*) – May God bless him and grant him peace. And at that moment I was not "so-and-so" (*fulānan*); rather I was Muhammad. If I had not been, what I said would not have been a valid statement for me to make, except by way of narration from him – May God bless him and grant him peace.[47]

ʻAbd al-Qādir seems here to be offering al-Jīlī's idea of the Muhammadan Reality as an *ex post facto* explanation for a mystical experience that he underwent himself. It is only through recourse to the ideas of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality in the Friends of God and their concomitant annihilation in the Messenger, in other words, that ʻAbd al-Qādir is able to explain his otherwise scandalous utterance of a prophetic hadith ("Were Moses son of ʻImrān alive, he would have to follow me.") as if he were the original speaker.[48]

It might reasonably be asked, however, how we know that ʻAbd al-Qādir is here drawing upon al-Jīlī in particular. The first indication to that effect comes in the series of quotations from earlier Sufis quoted by ʻAbd al-Qādir at the beginning of this passage, which he believed to be expressions of the same experience that he himself had undergone. The reader will not have failed to spot that the statement of al-Shiblī is the one that al-Jīlī uses in chapter 60 of *al-Insān al-kāmil* in support of his idea of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality in the Friends of God; indeed, I know of no textual source in which this statement appears other than *al-Insān al-kāmil* itself. That ʻAbd al-Qādir's text is in dialogue with al-Jīlī's is further reinforced, moreover, by the fact that the two other statements that ʻAbd al-Qādir quotes here are also found in *al-Insān al-kāmil* – specifically, in the chapter on the Psalms – where they serve as support for al-Jīlī's idea of *walāyah* and its relationship to prophethood.[49] These two statements, in fact, were especially important to al-Jīlī (as opposed to other Ibn ʻArabian Sufis), given that they were attributed respectively to the eponym of his *ṭarīqah*, ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and to a legendary Sufi figure of Yemen, Abū al-Ghayth ibn Jamīl (d. 1253).[50] It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī had al-Jīlī's *al-Insān al-kāmil* in mind when he dictated

this passage – and may in fact have expected his audience to make the connection. Indeed, he goes on to make the connection explicit by quoting al-Jīlī directly in the passage immediately following the passage quoted above:

> The same thing occurred to me on another occasion, with respect to his – May God bless him and grant him peace – statement: "I am the leader of the children of Adam, and there is none prouder [than me]." At that moment what those [Sufi] leaders had said became clear to me, by which I mean that that was a prototype (*anmūdhaj*) and an exemplar (*mithāl*), not that my spiritual state (*ḥālī*) was similar to theirs. God forbid it! God forbid it! God forbid it! God forbid it! For their spiritual station (*maqāmahum*) was more exalted and more sublime, and their spiritual state was more complete and more perfect (*atamm wa-akmal*). Thus the *shaykh* ʻAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī said, "Whoever meets (*ijtamaʻa*) another at one of the stations of perfection (*maqām min al-maqāmāt al-kamāliyyah*) is the very same as the other at that station. And whoever knows what we have said knows the meaning of the statements of al-Ḥallāj and others."[51]

Even someone like ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʼirī who believed that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human had produced certain unwelcome social consequences, therefore, was still heavily indebted to al-Jīlī's treatment of the idea. And ʻAbd al-Qādir seems to have been representative of other Sufi thinkers of his time in this respect. Mention might be made here, for instance, of the important nineteenth century Sufi ʻAlī Nūr al-Dīn al-Yashruṭī (d. 1891/1892). Like ʻAbd al-Qādir, al-Yashruṭī was of North African (in his case, Tunisian) origin and eventually settled in the Mashriq, establishing his own branch of the Shādhilī-Madanī *ṭarīqah* centred at Acre in Ottoman Palestine.[52] Like ʻAbd al-Qādir, moreover, he was "proficient in Ibn ʻArabi's teachings and opposed to Jili's criticisms [of Ibn ʻArabī]".[53] And yet, again like his Algerian contemporary, he also seems to have adopted al-Jīlī's notion of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality in the Friend of God. This is suggested by some of the statements attributed to al-Yashruṭī in a book – *Nafaḥāt al-ḥaqq* – written by his daughter Fāṭimah al-Yashruṭiyyah (d. 1978), who was an important Sufi in her own right:[54]

> Everything about me is Muhammad: my witnessing (*shuhūdī*)[55] is Muhammadan, my way of eating is Muhammadan, my way of drinking is Muhammadan.
>
> My heart is tied to the Muhammadan presence (*al-ḥadrah al-muḥammadiyyah*); it will never turn [to anything else] (*lā yaltafit abadan*).
>
> The fragrance of Muhammad's perfume has attracted them [namely, a group of visitors to his *zāwiyah*].[56]

These statements suggest not only that ʻAlī al-Yashruṭī conceived of *walāyah* in terms of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality, but also that, like ʻAbd

al-Qādir, he believed that he himself was a locus of manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality. Indeed, according to his daughter's account, others viewed him in a similar way: thus she tells us of a Shādhilī Sufi named Shaykh 'Abd Allāh who came to Acre and declared 'Alī al-Yashruṭī to be the "Lord of the Time" (*ṣāḥib al-waqt*), "the Pole" (*al-quṭb*), "the Saviour" (*al-ghawth*), and the locus of manifestation of God's "most exalted name".[57] At the same time as he saw himself and was seen by others as the Perfect Human and locus of manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality, however, al-Yashruṭī also appears to have adhered to al-Jīlī's view that the Muhammad was the one true Perfect Human. As Josef van Ess puts it, citing *Nafaḥāt al-ḥaqq*, "And so he is the Pole; indeed, he is the 'Muhammadan Presence', but he is not Muhammad himself. Muhammad was more: the Perfect Human (*al-insan al-kamil*), and no one else achieves this rank."[58] While al-Yashruṭī's indebtedness to al-Jīlī in particular, as opposed to the Ibn 'Arabian tradition more broadly, may not be as clear cut as that of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī, nevertheless his idea of the Perfect Human is largely consistent with al-Jīlī's. This suggests that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human may at least be in the background here.

Our final example of an important later Muslim thinker influenced by al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human takes us back to South Asia, and specifically to the work of Sir Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), the noted Muslim modernist, poet, and theorist of the idea of Pakistan. Iqbal's familiarity with al-Jīlī's work, particularly *al-Insān al-kāmil*, is undeniable. As noted previously, one of Iqbal's earliest articles, published in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1900, was specifically devoted to the ideas contained in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, including the idea of the Perfect Human.[59] Iqbal also reproduced much of this material in his 1908 doctoral dissertation, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*,[60] though interestingly he omitted from that latter work his aforementioned discussion of the likeness between the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (or perhaps more accurately, the Incarnation) and the idea of the Perfect Human.

What was Iqbal's opinion of al-Jīlī's thought? Iqbal's relationship to Sufism more generally is a complex topic that has often been the subject of analysis. Put simply, Iqbal criticised and rejected what he saw as the pantheistic (i.e. the Ibn 'Arabian) and ascetic tendencies within Sufism, which he (not unlike the Emir 'Abd al-Qādir) thought had contributed to the socio-political decline of the Muslim community, yet he also drew heavily on Sufi motifs and language, and took several great Sufis such as Rūmī and, later in his career, al-Ḥallāj, as guides in his construction of his Muslim modernist project.[61] As such, we can agree with Muhammad Qasim Zaman that Iqbal had "a mixed view of Sufism".[62]

With respect to his opinion of al-Jīlī more specifically, Iqbal's article on *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his treatment of al-Jīlī's Sufi metaphysics in his dissertation reveal a somewhat ambivalent view of al-Jīlī's thought. On the one hand, Iqbal refers to al-Jīlī as a "deep thinker" and tells us that al-Jīlī "combined in himself poetical imagination and philosophical genius".[63] On the other hand, he declares that al-Jīlī "is not a systematic thinker at all", and bemoans the fact that

"his mysticism constantly leads him to drop vague, obscure remarks savouring of Platonic poetry rather than philosophy.[64] His book is a confused jumble of metaphysics, religion, mysticism and ethics, very often excluding all likelihood of analysis."[65] What is most important, however, is Iqbal's apparently positive assessment – at least in his original article – of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human. Thus, in connection to this idea Iqbal notes "how greatly he has emphasized the Doctrine of the Logos; a Doctrine which has always found favour with almost all the profound thinkers of Islam",[66] and, in the conclusion to the article, writes,

> Amidst the irregularity and general want of clearness, his chief doctrine [namely, the doctrine of the Perfect Human], however, is sufficiently clear – a doctrine which makes the principal merit of our author, and brings him out as the triumphant possessor of the deep metaphysical meaning of the Trinity.[67]

Given this belief in the profundity of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human, we might expect the idea to have left its mark on Iqbal's own thought, and indeed this is what we seem to find. Two of the most important aspects of Iqbal's Muslim modernism are his concept of 'selfhood' (*khudī*) and his exaltation of the Prophet Muhammad above the rest of creation, both of which are connected to the idea of the Perfect Human. To begin with the former idea, perhaps the clearest expression of Iqbal's idea of *khudī* can be found in an explanation of the key ideas of his important 1915 poem *Asrār-i khudī* (*The Mysteries of Selfhood*) that Iqbal gave to R.A. Nicholson, the great Cambridge scholar of Sufism and translator of the poem:

> The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it, inasmuch as he helps to bring order into at least a portion of the chaos. The Koran indicates the possibility of other creators than God.[68]
>
> Obviously, this view of man and the universe is opposed to that of the English Neo-Hegelians as well as to all forms of panetheistic Súfism which regard absorption in a universal life or soul as the final aim and salvation of man. The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation, and he attains to this ideal by becoming more and more individual, more and more unique. The Prophet said, "*Takhallaqú bi-akhláq Allah*", "Create in yourselves the attributes of God." Thus man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique Individual. What then is life? It is individual: its highest form, so far, is the Ego (*Khudí*) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre, but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. Not that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary, he absorbs God into himself.[69]

There are several indications that Iqbal is presenting us here with a modern adaptation of the idea of the Perfect Human.[70] First, there is his citation of the Prophetic hadith '*Takhallaqū bi-akhlāq Allāh*'. This hadith was often cited by Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters, for whom it signifies the goal of human existence: to become a locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes.[71] Indeed, al-Qāshānī in his dictionary of Sufi technical terms goes so far as to define Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*) as "taking on the divine traits (*al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh*)".[72] Significantly for us, al-Jīlī also makes reference to this hadith in *al-Insān al-kāmil*:

> Know that the Real – May He be exalted – wanted His names and His attributes to become manifest (*tatajallá*), to inform mankind (*al-khalq*) about itself. So He revealed them in distinct loci of manifestation (*maẓāhir mutamayyizah*) and the coiled up inner realities (*al-bawāṭin al-mutaḥayyizah*), which are the essential existents that are manifested in the divine levels … For this reason the lord who praised God often (*al-sayyid al-awwāh*) [namely, Muhammad] commanded us, saying: "Take on the traits of God (*takhallaqū bi-akhlāq Allāh*)", so that His mysteries deposited in human forms (*asrāruhu al-muawadda'ah fī al-hayākil al-insāniyyah*) would be revealed.[73]

In al-Jīlī's reading, then, the hadith indicates humanity's capacity to serve as a locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes, and in this sense it constitutes a scriptural proof text for the idea of the Perfect Human. The second indication that the idea of the Perfect Human is at least in the background in Iqbal's conception of *khudī* is connected to his somewhat idiosyncratic translation of the hadith just discussed. While the imperative '*takhallaqū*' is usually understood to mean 'take on' or 'assume', Iqbal exploits the connotations of the root of *kh-l-q* to translate it as 'create'. In this way, he is able to connect the hadith to the idea set out at the beginning of the passage, namely that humanity has a share in God's act of creation.[74] This idea is reminiscent of al-Jīlī's conception of the miraculous powers of the Perfect Human, particularly his approving quotation of the view of an anonymous Sufi that the Friend of God is the "one who moves" (*muḥarrik*) things in the phenomenal world,[75] and his explanation of how, "when [the Perfect Human's] tongue utters the creation of a thing (*takwīn shay'*), this occurs through the command of God".[76] For both al-Jīlī and Iqbal, then, the perfected individual shares in the creative powers of God. Third, we should note Iqbal's use of the terms "complete individual" and "completest person", which are possible English equivalents of *al-insān al-kāmil*. Finally, Iqbal also indicates later in his explanation of *khudī* – and in *Asrār-i khudī* itself – that the culmination of 'selfhood' is the attainment of the "divine viceregency" (*niyābat-i ilāhī*).[77] This calls to mind the identification of the Perfect Humans as 'viceregents' (*khulafā'*) and 'deputies' (*nuwwāb*) of God – and, for al-Jīlī, of Muhammad – in the Ibn 'Arabian tradition, including in *al-Insān al-kāmil*. While Iqbal gave no indication in *Asrār-i khudī* or in his other discussions of the

concept of 'selfhood' that he was drawing upon al-Jīlī in particular, nevertheless the parallels identified here might suggest that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human may at least have been in the back of Iqbal's mind when he was developing the concept.

Something similar can be said of Iqbal's exaltation of the Prophet Muhammad.[78] As we know, the identification of Muhammad as the one true Perfect Human and his elevation to almost divine status are key elements of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human. Iqbal shared al-Jīlī's devotion to the Prophet. Thus his 1918 poem *Rumūz-i bīkhudī* (*The Symbols of Selflessness*) – the sequel to *Asrār-i khudī* in which Iqbal moves from his focus on the individual to a consideration of the Muslim community as a whole – ends with a homage to Muhammad, which begins:

> Your appearance (*ẓuhūr*) was the youth of life; through your manifestation (*jilvah*) life's dreams were interpreted.
>
> From your throne the earth derived its value; from kissing your roof the sky derived its height.
>
> From the ray of your face (*tāb-i ru-yi tō*) the six corners of the world derived their light (*rawshan*); the Turks, the Persians and the Arabs were all your slaves.[79]

The language used here – especially terms such as 'appearance' (*ẓuhūr*) and 'manifestation' (*jilvah*) and the image of the 'ray' of Muhammad's face – evokes the idea of the manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality or Muhammadan Light, which as we know is a key element of al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human. A similar conception of Muhammad as a cosmic being is found in a later poem of Iqbal's, the 1932 *Jāvīdnāmah* (*The Book of Eternity*), which is generally considered to be Iqbal's magnum opus. Significantly, according to Fazlur Rahman, among the "most interesting features" of the poem is "the use of Jili's symbols – the Heaven of the Moon, the Heaven of the Venus and so on",[80] by which Rahman means al-Jīlī's discussion of these 'heavens' in the context of his treatment of the levels of existence and the microcosmic nature of the Perfect Human (as set out in Chapters 2 and 3 of this book). Given the possible influence of al-Jīlī's thought on the *Jāvīdnāmah*, therefore, it is notable that Iqbal presents us in that poem with perhaps his most exalted description of the Prophet. This description – in which, in an allusion to Qur'an 17:1 (a verse traditionally understood as a reference to Muhammad's night-journey and ascension), Iqbal refers to Muhammad as "His servant" (*'abduhu*) – is put into the mouth of al-Ḥallāj:

> Zindah Rūd [a persona of Iqbal]:
>
> "I ask you, though asking is an error: the mystery of that essence (*jawhar*) whose name is Mustafa,
>
> Is it a man (*ādamī*) or an essence in existence, such as sometimes comes into existence?"

Al-Ḥallāj:
"Before him the cosmos has bowed its head; he who has called himself 'His servant' (*'abduhu*).

His servant is beyond your understanding; for he is both 'man' (*ādam*) and 'essence' (*jawhar*).

His essence is neither Arab nor non-Arab; he is both man and more eternal (*aqdam*) than man.

His servant is the one who gives form to destinies (*ṣūratgar-i taqdīrhā*); in him are both acts of destruction (*vīrānah-hā*) and acts of construction (*ta'mīrhā*).

His servant is both life-giving (*jān-fazā*) and life-destroying (*jān-sitān*); His servant is both glass (*shīshah*) and heavy stone (*sang-i girān*).

'The servant' (*'abd*) is one thing, 'His servant' is something else; we are all [in a state of] expectancy (*intiẓār*), he is the expected one (*muntaẓar*).

His servant is fate (*dahr*), and fate is from His servant; we are all coloured, and he is colourless and scentless.

His servant is without beginning and without end; where are morning and evening with respect to His servant?

No one is aware of His servant's secret (*sirr*); His servant is nothing but the secret of 'except God' (*illā Allāh*).

'There is no God' (*lā ilāh*) is a sword (*tīgh*), and its edge (*dam*) is His servant; if you want it said more plainly, say, 'He is His servant (*huwa 'abduhu*).'

His servant is the 'how many' and 'what kind' (*chand ū chigūn*) of existents; His servant is the inner secret of existents (*rāz-i darūn-i kā'ināt*).

You will not discover the true meaning of these two verses, until you see from the station (*maqām*) of 'You did not throw' (*mā ramayt*) [see Q 8:117].

O Zindah Rūd, pass beyond hearing and speaking; O Zindah Rūd, become submerged in existence (*wujūd*)."[81]

Iqbal here goes further than he does anywhere else, I think, in blurring the line between Muhammad and God, just as al-Jīlī blurs that line in *al-Insān al-kāmil* and his other works, particularly the *Kamālāt*. Indeed, while Iqbal puts these verses into the mouth of al-Ḥallāj (with whom, as we have seen, al-Jīlī shares his highly exalted conception of Muhammad), he might just as well have put them into the mouth of al-Jīlī. The connection between al-Jīlī's and Iqbal's positions in this regard becomes clearer if we consider a passage from al-Jīlī's *al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiyyah*. In the context of a discussion of the divine name 'He' (*huwa*), al-Jīlī writes:

> Know that this name is the defined portion (*muḥtadd*) of His outer nature (*ẓāhirihi*), [which is] His Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad – May God bless him and grant him peace. The proof of that is that He – May He be exalted – says: "Glory be to Him who brought His servant (*'abdahu*) by

> night" (Q 17:1). So He linked the spirit (*rūḥ*) of Muhammad to the *hā'* [i.e. the *hu* of *'abdahu*], which is [God's] "He-ness" (*al-huwiyyah*). So it is therefore known that His name "He" is the defined portion of his [namely, Muhammad's] inner nature (*bāṭinihi*) – May God bless him and grant him peace – and His name "God" (*Allāh*) is the defined portion of his outer nature – May God bless him and grant him peace, since it has been established that the name for divinity is the locus of manifestation of the name for "He-ness". In reference to this idea He – May He be exalted – said: "Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed God" (Q 4:80); "You did not throw (*mā ramayta*) when you threw, but it was God who threw" (Q 8:17); "Those who pledge allegiance to you only pledge allegiance to God."(Q 48:10)[82]

While this is a complex passage that merits closer analysis, the important thing to note for our purposes is that al-Jīlī here uses two Qur'anic verses – 17:1 and 8:17 – that are central to Iqbal's verses quoted above, as scriptural proof texts for his notion of the divine manifestation in Muhammad. While it is true that, like the hadith discussed above, these Qur'anic verses were also employed by Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters to similar effect,[83] it is again possible, given his familiarity with al-Jīlī's work, that Iqbal had al-Jīlī's use of these Qur'anic verses – and his conception of Muhammad more generally – in the back of his mind when composing his *Jāvīdnāmah*. In this regard, I can only echo Fazlur Rahman's view, stated almost 75 years ago now, that a "comparative study along intensive lines of Jili's *Al-Insan ul-Kamil* and Iqbal's *Javid Namah* will be worth the trouble for a serious student of Iqbal".[84]

It would appear from the above that al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human has provided the framework in which Muslim thinkers of different times and places (Bosnian, South Asian, and North African) have thought about the Perfect Human up until the modern period. Even those thinkers who do not refer to him directly seem to have his ideas in the background. And several of the most important Muslim thinkers of modern times do in fact make explicit reference to his work. This supports the contention of this book, that al-Jīlī did not merely repackage Ibn 'Arabī's idea of the Perfect Human in systematic form, as is usually thought, but rather developed a new conception of the idea, and in doing so brought the idea of the Perfect Human into the heart and centre of Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysics.

By way of backing up this claim, we shall leave the final word to the great North African philosopher of history Ibn Khaldūn, who in his *Muqaddimah* so often anticipated the findings of modern scholars of Islamic history and thought. In a treatise on Sufism titled *Shifā' al-sā'il wa-tahdhīb al-masā'il* (*The Cure for the Questioner and the Setting Right of Issues*), and again in the section on Sufism in chapter six of the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn presents a critical assessment of Ibn 'Arabian Sufism.[85] Setting out the key elements of the metaphysical worldview of those whom he calls "the adherents of manifestation, loci of manifestation, [divine] names, and presences" (*aṣḥāb al-tajallī wa-al-maẓāhir wa-al-asmā'*

wa-al-ḥaḍrāt),[86] Ibn Khaldūn bases his presentation of Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysics on al-Farghānī's commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tāʾiyyah*, a text that Ibn Khaldūn probably knew through his friend Ibn al-Khaṭīb's (d. 1374) book on Sufism, *Rawḍat al-taʻrīf bi-al-ḥubb al-sharīf*.[87] Though, as we have seen, Ibn Khaldūn does briefly discuss the Ibn ʻArabian concept of the Pole (*al-quṭb*), and associates the Poles with those whom he calls "the Perfect Ones (*al-kummal*) among the Muhammadans (*al-muḥammadiyyīn*)/among the people of the Muhammadan religious community (*ahl al-millah al-muḥammadiyyah*)",[88] nevertheless he makes no mention of the term *al-insān al-kāmil*. The reason for this, I think, is that Ibn Khaldūn was writing just prior to al-Jīlī,[89] using as his source an Ibn ʻArabian thinker – al-Farghānī – who did not put nearly so great an emphasis on the idea of the Perfect Human as al-Jīlī did. It was only after al-Jīlī that the idea of the Perfect Human came to be seen as an integral part of the Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysical worldview. In both the significance that he accords to the idea and in the content of his idea of the Perfect Human, then, al-Jīlī marks a new stage in the history of Sufi thought.

Notes

1 Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shîʻa", 2. A similar argument has been made by Valerie Hoffman, who proposes that the centrality of the Prophet and his family within modern Egyptian Sufism (perhaps under the influence of Ibn ʻArabian ideas) is possible evidence in support of Hodgson's statement. See Hoffman, "Devotion to the Prophet", 615.

2 Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:462.

3 See in this regard the hadiths of the Imams quoted in Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 45–46; Amir-Moezzi, *Spirituality*, 105, 112. And on the Imami Shiʻi view of the Imam more generally, see Amir-Moezzi, *Spirituality*, 103–306.

4 In this regard, it should be noted that the Yemen-based Zaydī branch of Shīʻism does not view the Imam in such exalted metaphysical terms as the Twelver or Ismaili Shiʻah, and was, moreover, actively hostile to Ibn ʻArabian Sufism. See E. Kohlberg, "Some Zaydī Views on the Companions of the Prophet", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39, no. 1 (1976), pp. 91–98, 91; al-Ḥibshī, *al-Ṣūfiyyah*, 53–66; W. Madelung, "Zaydi Attitudes to Sufism", *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. F. de Jong and B. Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 124–144. In connection to al-Jīlī's Yemeni environment, therefore, a more profitable line of research might be to investigate parallels between al-Jīlī's idea of the Perfect Human and the conception of the Imam found in the literature produced by the Ṭayyibī Ismailis of Yemen. For Ṭayyibī Ismaili thought, see F. Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 269–275; T. Mayer and W. Madelung (ed. and tr.), *Avicenna's Allegory on the Soul: An Ismaili Interpretation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

5 Thus Shiʻi thinkers such as Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. after 1385), his student Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. 1495/1496), and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640), Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1680), and Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwārī (d. *c*. 1680) attempted to integrate Ibn ʻArabian Sufi metaphysical ideas into their Shīʻī worldview, including by identifying the Perfect Humans with the Shīʻī Imams. See Amir-Moezzi, *Spirituality*, 107–113; S. Kamada, "*Walāya* in Fayḍ Kāshānī", *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy, and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. T. Lawson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 455–468; M. Terrier, "Le *Maḥbûb al-qulûb* de Quṭb al-Dîn Ashkevarî: Une œuvre méconnue

dans l'histoire de l'histoire de la sagesse en islam", *Journal Asiatique* 298, no. 2 (2010), 345–387.

6 Nūrbakhsh's thought and the movement that he inspired, it should be noted, were part of a broader trend in Persian Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which saw the emergence of several mystical-messianic movements with political programmes, which adopted and reworked ideas found in earlier esoteric or 'extremist' (*ghulāt*) Shī'ism and in Ṣūfism. Among such movements were the Sarbadārs, the Ḥurūfīs, the Nuqṭavīs, and, most famously and successfully, the Safavids. See B.S. Amoretti, "Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, ed. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 610–655.

7 S. Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nūrbakhshīya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 98.

8 Quoted in ibid., 98–99.

9 See ibid., 97–102.

10 See ibid., 97–98.

11 In using this term, I am borrowing an image used by Sarah Stroumsa in the different context of medieval Andalusian *falsafah*, to describe the mutual influence of Jewish and Muslim philosophers upon one another. See S. Stroumsa, "Thinkers of 'This Peninsula': Toward an Integrative Approach to the Study of Philosophy in al-Andalus", *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. D.M. Freidenreich and M. Goldstein (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 44–53.

12 Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:451.

13 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 119.

14 See ibid., 118–120.

15 See ibid., 129.

16 See ibid., 130.

17 Indeed, on numerous occasions in the chapters on the scriptures his Ibn 'Arabian Sufi metaphysics leads him to offer a more benevolent interpretation of the doctrines of the Jews and Christians than that found in mainstream Islamic thought. See e.g. ibid., 130:

> They [namely, the Christians] are not among the obstinate (*mu'ānidīn*), nor are they among those who have no master (*mawlá*), because it is the unbelievers (*al-kāfirīn*) who have no master. For they are, in reality (*'alá al-ḥaqīqah*), in the right (*muḥiqqūn*), because God – May He be exalted – is the reality of Jesus (*ḥaqīqat 'īsá*), and the reality of his mother (*ḥaqīqat ummihi*), and the reality of the Holy Spirit (*ḥaqīqat al-rūḥ al-quds*), indeed, the reality of everything (*ḥaqīqat kull shay'*).

18 'Abd al-Qādir in fact seems to have claimed these titles for himself. See al-Jīlānī, *Dīwān*, 163–164:

> I am a shaykh, a righteous one, a Friend of God (*anā shaykh wa-ṣāliḥ wa-walīy*)/I am the Pole and a model for mankind (*anā quṭb wa-qudwah li-al-anām*)/I am 'Abd al-Qādir, may my Time be glad/and my ancestor is Muṣṭafá [namely, Muhammad], the mediator of mankind.

Certainly, his later followers viewed him as the Pole of his age. Thus the famous lexicographer al-Fayrūzābādī, for instance, who, it will be remembered, was in Yemen at the same time as al-Jīlī, wrote a book titled *Rawḍat al-nāẓir fī manāqib al-ghawth 'Abd al-Qādir*. See Y. Ziedan, *Duwwāmāt al-tadayyun* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2013), 281. See also al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1329.

19 It should be noted that the attribution of these discourses to 'Abd al-Qādir has been called into question. See W. Braune, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "'Abd al-Ḳādir al-Djīlānī". What

matters for our purposes, however, is that by al-Jīlī's time, "the 'Abd al-Ḳādir of legend" (in Braune's words), that is, the exponent of these Sufi ideas, was long established, and it was this legendary figure, therefore, that al-Jīlī would have thought of as the 'real' 'Abd al-Qādir.

20 Al-Jīlānī, *Dīwān*, 206–216. See also Ziedan, *Duwwāmāt*, 279.

21 It should be noted, however, that Ibn 'Arabī engaged with the figure of 'Abd al-Qādir, whom he held "in high esteem", naming him as one of the Poles, 'The Imam of his Age' (*imām al-'aṣr*), 'The Leader of his Time' (*sayyid waqtihi*), a Friend of God, and one of the spiritual elite whom he calls *al-malāmiyyah* (the People of Blame). See Abrahamov, *Ibn al-'Arabī*, 152. In light of this, it is possible that al-Jīlī's view of 'Abd al-Qādir was mediated through Ibn 'Arabī. Indeed, at one point in *al-Insān al-kāmil* he quotes 'Abd al-Qādir but cites a passage from Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt* as his textual source. See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 128.

22 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 210.

23 Ibid., 207.

24 Annemarie Schimmel is therefore correct – though probably does not go far enough – when she says that "Jīlī … did his utmost to systematize the thoughts of Ibn 'Arabī, though at certain points he differed from him", Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 281.

25 An excellent first step in rectifying this is K. El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), esp. part III.

26 Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 138. See also ibid., 254–257, for prayers on "the pre-creation mystery of Muhammad".

27 See Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger"; Addas, "'At the distance'". See also O. Ogunnaike, "Annihilation in the Messenger Revisited: Clarifications on a Contemporary Sufi Practice and its Precedents", *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016), 13–34. For advocates of the Neo-Sufism thesis, the eighteenth century witnessed the quest for mystical annihilation in God (*fanā' fī Allāh*) being replaced by the quest for mystical annihilation in the Messenger (*fanā' fī al-rasūl*), as well as the rejection of Ibn 'Arabian ideas. For more on this issue, see R.S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", *Der Islam* 70 (1993), 52–87.

28 Perhaps with this in mind, Hodgson describes al-Jīlī as "the most effective popularizer of Ibn-al-'Arabî's solutions", Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:462.

29 See Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*; Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*; Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*; Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship*.

30 It should be noted in this regard that Azfar Moin, the pioneering scholar in this area, does not look at the transmission of ideas through texts (as I do), preferring to concentrate on material culture and ritual practice.

31 For al-Bosnawī's life and thought, see R. Hafizović, "A Bosnian Commentator on the *Fusus al-hikam*", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 47 (2010), 87–107. As Noel Malcolm writes,

> Most of the literary works of the Bosnian Muslims [during the Ottoman period] were written in Turkish, Arabic, or Persian. There are obvious reasons for this: some were writing in forms where the language was an inseparable part of the genre, such as the elaborate courtly poetry of the Persian tradition; some were dealing with subjects, such as philosophy, where an entire technical vocabulary was present in Arabic but lacking Serbo-Croat; and of course many were writing for readers outside of the Slav lands.

N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Pan Books, 2002), 102. Both the second and third points apply to al-Bosnawī, whom Malcolm includes in his list of eight or nine "major writers" of Ottoman Bosnia, an indication of al-Bosnawī's significance within the intellectual history of the Bosnian nation.

32 C. Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, tr. J. Lameer (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), Supplement 2:294, tells us of the existence of a manuscript of this versified work in Mosul.
33 Al-Bosnawī, *Kitāb al-Qirá al-rūḥī*, 6. See also ibid., 3.
34 Ibid., 2–3.
35 See R. Sellheim, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "al-Tahānawī".
36 See e.g. al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 270–271, 281, 816, 1270, 1311–1312, 1746.
37 Ibid., 281.
38 Al-Tahānawī in fact does not cite from the *Fukūk* directly, but rather from a passage quoted in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.
39 On the *Mawāqif*, see Woerner-Powell, *Another Road*, 159ff.
40 See Weismann, "God and the Perfect Human", 66–68.
41 Al-Jazā'irī, *al-Mawāqif*, 2:289, 1:228.
42 See Woerner-Powell, *Another Road*, 167.
43 See ibid., 163, 196, 203.
44 See Weisman, "God and the Perfect Man", 64.
45 See Woerner-Powell, *Another Road*, 163–164.
46 Al-Jazā'irī, *al-Mawāqif*, 1:58.
47 Ibid., 1:59.
48 Ibn 'Arabī also cites this hadith in the *Futūḥāt*. See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 241.
49 See al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 128.
50 For the significance of Ibn Jamīl to the Ibn 'Arabian Sufis of Yemen, see Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 236; Ziedan, *'Abd al-Karīm*, 47; Ziedan, *al-Fikr*, 45–46; al-Jīlī, *Ibdā'*, 36.
51 Al-Jazā'irī, *al-Mawāqif*, 1:59.
52 See Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 126; J. van Ess, "Libanesische Miszellen: 6: *Die Yašruṭīya*", *Die Welt des Islams* 16, no. 1 (1975), 101–103; A. Bötcher, *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Yashruṭiyya".
53 Weisman, "God and the Perfect Man", 70.
54 On Fāṭimah al-Yashruṭiyyah, see L. Cadavid, "Fatima al-Yashrutiyya: The Life and Practice of a Sufi Woman and Teacher", *Voices of Islam*, volume 1: *Voices of Tradition*, ed. V. Cornell (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2007), 175–200.
55 This term is translated by van Ess as "hiersein" – "being here".
56 Quoted in van Ess, "Libanesische Miszellen", 46–47.
57 See ibid., 47.
58 Ibid., 48.
59 See Iqbal, "The Doctrine". For a recent attempt to explain this article in light of Iqbal's involvement in contemporary philosophical debates, see F. Yilmaz, "Overcoming Nihilism Through Sufism: An Analysis of Iqbal's Article on 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 41 (2018), 1–29.
60 See Iqbal, *Development of Metaphysics*, 116–133
61 See M. Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self (Asrár-i khudí): A Philosophical Poem*, tr. R.A. Nicholson (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1920), xii–xiv, xviii; F. Rahman, "Iqbal and Mysticism", *Iqbal as a Thinker*, ed. M.R. Siddiqi (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1944), 206–230; M. Siddiqi, "A Historical Study of Iqbal's Views of Sufism", *Islamic Studies* 5, no. 4 (1966), 411–427; A. Nur-ud-Din, "Attitude toward Sufism", *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, ed. M. Hafeez (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1971), 288–300; A. Schimmel, "Mystic Impact of Hallaj", *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, 310–324; M. Nazir-Ali, *The Influence of Maulānā Jalāluddīn Rūmī on the Theology of 'Allāma Iqbāl* (Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1974); Hodgson, *Venture*, 3:347–349; M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, intr. J. Majeed (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 119; M. Iqbal, *Taking Issue & Allah's Answer*, tr. M. Dalvi (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2012), xxi–xxii, 85; M.Q. Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 196–197.

62 Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, 197.
63 Iqbal, "The Doctrine," 78.
64 Iqbal, it should be noted, was heavily critical of Plato and his pernicious influence on 'pantheistic' Sufism. See Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, xxii–xxiii, 56–59; Nur-ud-Din, "Attitude", 292–294.
65 Iqbal, "The Doctrine", 96–97.
66 Ibid., 82.
67 Ibid., 97. According to Fazlur Rahman, Iqbal's study of *al-Insān al-kāmil* demonstrates "his bearings towards this aspect of esoteric philosophy. Iqbal's early works show very slight traces of this influence, which was to bear its most remarkable fruit much later in his poetic career." Rahman, "Iqbal and Mysticism", 229.
68 In the preface to Nicholson's English translation, there is a note here that reads: "Kor. ch. 23, v. 14: 'Blessed is God, the best of those who create.'"
69 Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, xviii–xix.
70 Cf. Hodgson, *Venture*, 3:350.
71 See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 22, 283–284; W. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 23, 36, 45. Already Goldziher had recognised the importance of this motif as the "*summum bonum*" of Sufi thought. See Goldziher, *Introduction*, 21–22, note 23. It was also the subject of a long discussion by al-Ghazālī in his book on the 99 most beautiful names of God. See W. Chittick, "Worship", *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 218–236, 222.
72 Al-Qāshānī, *Mu'jam*, 174.
73 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 156.
74 Cf. Marshall Hodgson's description of Iqbal's concept of *khudī* in *Venture*, 3:348: "The destiny to which each finite individual, each human being, was called was to be more and more like God: more and more uniquely individual, and therefore more and more creative."
75 Al-Jīlī, *al-Insān*, 126.
76 Ibid., 152. See also ibid., 72.
77 M. Iqbal, *Kulliyyāt-i Ash'ār-i Fārsī-yi Iqbāl-i Lāhūrī*, ed. M. Darwīsh (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Intishārāt-i Jāv īdān, 1366 SH [=1987/1988], 112–114; Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, xxvii–xxviii, 78–84.
78 Cf. Hodgson, *Venture*, 3:350: "As for the Ṣûfîs, so for Iqbâl, Muḥammad was the prototype, in his universality and rationality, of the ultimate perfect man."
79 Iqbal, *Kulliyyāt-i Ash'ār-i Fārsī*, 196. For an alternative translation, see M. Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness: A Philosophical Poem*, tr. A.J. Arberry (London: J. Murray, 1953), 79.
80 Rahman, "Iqbal and Mysticism", 229.
81 Iqbal, *Kulliyyāt-i Ash'ār-i Fārsī*, 398–399. For an alternative English translation, see M. Iqbal, *Javidname: Translated from the Persian with Introduction and Notes*, tr. A.J. Arberry (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 99.
82 Al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt*, 67.
83 See Izutsu, *Sufism & Taoism*, 96, 256, 259; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 113–114, 176, 211, 380.
84 Rahman, "Iqbal and Mysticism", 230.
85 On these works, see now F. Morrissey and R. Nettler, "Ibn Khaldūn on Sufism: A Story of Truth vs. Falsehood in Three Parts", *Maghreb Review* 44, no. 4 (2019).
86 Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā' al-sā'il wa-tahdhīb al-masā'il*, ed. M. al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 107.
87 See Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 192.
88 Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā'*, 109; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 3:995.

89 Ibn Khaldūn wrote the *Shifā'* between 1372 and 1374, and completed the first draft of the *Muqaddimah* in 1377, more than two decades before al-Jīlī wrote *al-Insān al-kāmil*. For the dating of the *Shifā'*, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibn Khaldūn on Sufism: Remedy for the Questioner in Search of Answers (Shifā' al-Sā'il li-Tahdhīb al-Masā'il)*, tr. Y. Özer (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2017), xxvii–xxviii. For the *Muqaddimah*, see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 1:liii.

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